The Church Goer.

THE Church-Goer.

RURAL RIDES;

OR,

Calls at Country Churches.

Second Series.

"IF IN YOUR BOUNDS YOU CHANCE TO LIGHT
UPON A SLEEK SNUG FODGEL WIGHT,
O' STATURE SHORT, * * *
THAT'S HE—MARK WEEL."

BRISTOL:
JOHN RIDLER. LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO.

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Dedication.

TO MR. JOHN RIDLER, MY PUBLISHER.

Sir,

The elder D'Israeli has, in his "Curiosities," given us an interesting paper "On the Secret History of Authors who ruined their Booksellers." You cannot, Sir, accuse me of this crime, nor class me with these worthies; though considering the extent to which publishers have imposed upon penmen, had I sent you before Mr. Serjeant Stephen, to expiate the crimes of your order at large, I should only perhaps have perpetrated an act of particular wrong to perform a feat of general justice.

When the gentry and yeomen of the county assemble yearly at the Gloucestershire Feast, they celebrate their "philanthropic orgies" by singing a song about a certain namesake of yours, Sir,—it may be an ancestor,—who

was renowned for the possession of a very remarkable Oven—I need hardly say I allude to GEORGE RIDLER. Of that extraordinary ditty I now retain but a feeble remembrance, for it is many years since I heard my old friend Giles, of Newport, troll it forth at the White Lion: if I do not, however, greatly mistake, one fragment of the county carol ran thus:

> "This George Ridler he was a jolly old man,
> And his head it grew above his hair."

If this quaintly recorded phenomenon was attributable to pride and presumption, I shall not be surprised to see some day the same singular circumstance related of you, after having successfully disposed of two complete series of my work, and intrepidly entered upon a third. You are a fortunate man, Sir, to have such an author, and I conceiving myself equally fortunate in having such a publisher, dedicate this my little book to you. As you run all the risk, it is only fair you should have some portion of the glory. I can boldly look you in the face, and defy you to point out a single volume of my previous performance in stock. I can fearlessly glance round your shop, and see no production of mine stare

its parent in unsaleable reproach from the shelves. "Out of print," has been your answer, in my own hearing, to frequent enquirers for the Church Goer; and that the public may continue as favourable and equally undiscriminating as to the demerits of this, the Second Series of the Rural Rides, at least until you are compensated for print and paper, is, Sir, the earnest prayer of,

Yours sincerely,

THE CHURCH GOER.

GILLYFLOWER COTTAGE,

Jan. 1, 1850.

Preface.

"A HASTY truth," said Bishop Hackett, quoting from the popular Proverbs, "bringeth forth blind whelps; so a good tale, tumbled out before the time is ripe for it, is ungrateful to the hearer." The same thing may be predicated of the publication of a book; and if after having already printed two, I had not previously ascertained there were no numbers on hand before I issued another, I think I should have produced these pages eminently out of season. The former impression I am assured, however, are all disposed of; and a clear stage has emboldened the Bookseller to call on me for a preface, and permission to bring forth the third. If the kindness of the public make an old man vain, or class him amongst those of whom Hierom says, "they listen to nothing willingly but their own praise—nihil libenter audiunt nisi laudes suas"—I shall regret that I ever put pen on paper; for since the wine of my life has flown forth in tolerable humility, it would indeed be sad to see the lees run off in turgid conceit. If these pages pass for any thing better than trifles—than "as toyes," as old

Burton saith,—"as an almanack out of date," I will endeavour to attribute it rather to the good-natured patience of the public than to any popular quality they possess. I only trust that in trespassing this third time upon the easy temper of book-buyers, they will not have to accuse my added years of having done

this wrong,
To make me write too much, and live too long.

It has been suggested that in these times of unsound churchmanship and perilous doctrines, I should prefix a confession of faith—an exposition of principles, to this my second series of Rural Rides; I, however, decline the ticklish and troublesome task, beyond the safe declaration —that I neither long for Rome, nor sigh for Geneva; that I admire the burning zeal neither of Bishop Bonner, nor John Calvin, and that Latimer and Servetus, had they lived in our day, might have lived on without my ever once wishing, for the sake of Election, Predestination, or Extreme Unction, to expend a shilling in the purchase of undried faggots for their particular and painful use.

It is perhaps unnecessary to add that the following papers, (like the previous ones,) are reprinted from the pages of the Bristol Times.

The Church Goer.

Kelston.

KELSTON is situate on the old upper Bath and Bristol road, about four miles from the former and eight from the latter. The little village itself consists of a group of cottages, with rose-covered fronts and rustic porches. It is very beautifully situated, and, since the opening of the railway has left it to itself, it has a quiet secluded air.

I inquired of a heavy lout of a boy, who was leaning his shoulder against the wall, and chewing a long straw in a kind of cloddish rumination, the road to the Church.

"Go down there," said he, pointing to an ill-kept lane, "and turn to the right."

I did as I was bid: I went down the lane and turned to *my* right; but my right was not the boy's right, as he then stood; so after describing a semicircle, and walking nearly a quarter of a mile, I found myself back again in the village, but no Church in view. There was, however, a woman with a young girl sitting in the door-way of a cottage close by, and literally "under their own vine," and to this patriarchal family I now applied for information.

"The Church, sir?" repeated the woman. "This young girl is going close to it, and will show you the way."

The girl at once rose and civilly offered her services.

"Thank you, child," said I, as

"Like youth and crabbed age,"

we walked together, to the manifest surprise of the neigh-

bours, who could not conceive, as we passed, into whose company Sarah had fallen.

I thought I would take advantage of the simple candour of my young companion, and ask her a few questions about the parish as we proceeded. I give the reader, as nearly as possible, the conversation as it occurred. I should previously, however, tell you, that the Dean of York, the Very Rev. Dr. Cockburn, is the Rector of Kelston.

"Is the Dean at home, my good girl?"

"No, Sir; he has not been here since May."

"When is he expected to return?"

"I don't exactly know, Sir; he generally comes back a little before Christmas."

"Then I suppose three or four months are as much as he is at Kelston, out of the whole year?"

"About that, Sir."

"What's the name of the curate?"

"There is no curate."

"Then who does duty in the Dean's absence? You don't shut up the church, do you?"

"No, Sir; somebody comes from Bath generally. We have had an old gentleman, very hard to hear, the last two Sundays; he came in a fly."

"Then you don't know, until you see him, who you are to have?"

"No, Sir. There is the Church;" she continued, pointing up a little sequestered lane to the left; and so saying, she turned into a house at hand before I could thank her. Indeed I thought she, as well as myself, was going to prayers; but it seemed not.

Kelston Church is a small ancient edifice, of one aisle and chancel. Though the bell had not yet begun to ring, both the Church and churchyard gates were open. Two sleek donkeys (I suppose the property of the Dean) were browsing in confident ease above the remains of the rude forefathers of the hamlet; and as I approached, they established themselves in a kind of menacing attitude on the gravel walk which led to the Church, as if determined to

dispute my passage. I advanced, but they did not move; and certain nervous twitchings about their hind quarters proved to me they had seemingly resolved to show me more of their heels than was pleasant, if I persisted in my determination to proceed in a direct course. So thinking peace even with these long-eared creatures under all circumstances the best, I made a *detour*, saying, as I turned aside into the damp grass, "We need not quarrel; there is room enough in the world for men and donkeys, if we only manage matters discreetly."

Still, I confess, Dean or Deacon, layman or clergyman, ought to find some place to feed his he-asses in, instead of a churchyard; or, if he will depasture them above the dead on week days, the animals ought to be removed at least during prayers on Sunday, so that the sensibilities of surviving relatives may not be offended as they enter Church, by seeing the graves of those whom they loved while living affording fodder for a brace of donkeys.

> "Approach with reverence—there are those beneath
> Whose dwelling-place is heaven,"

says the poet, and the sentiment is suggested by a natural and touching feeling, which certainly must be sorely hurt by any such exhibition as that to which I refer. That this was the case at Kelston also, and that there were those who did not like it, was evident from an incident which I witnessed after Church. Though the parties whose business it is to attend to the place have done nothing for a burial ground, which with a little care might be made very pretty and picturesque, the simple people themselves, whose friends are interred there, have in almost every instance trained round the tombs of their departed relatives roses, that grow in wild but beautiful luxuriance. So much so, indeed, as to take the peculiar fancy of the donkeys, which were poking their noses about amongst the little sepulchral *parterres*, as we came out of Church. This was observed by a plain grave-looking farmer in black, who ran up, and with considerable show of indignation drove the animals before him out of the burial ground. It struck me that it

may probably have been the grave of him or her for whom the honest farmer was even then in mourning, that the Dean's donkeys were despoiling.

But, as the book writers say, I anticipate. To go back to my first entrance into the churchyard—I had been walking about some time, reading the tombs and watching my long-eared neighbours, who in their turn watched me, as if they thought I had no business there, when an elderly rustic made his appearance.

"This is a pretty churchyard of your's, friend," said I, for I seriously meditated pumping something out of him.

"Yes, if it were attended to," was his reply; "but nobody cares to look after it without a satisfaction." [I suppose a rural word for consideration.]

"But there is a great quantity of fine roses round the graves."

"The people plant them theyselves; but what's the good on it, they're soon pulled down or overgrown. *Ah, it's a sadly neglected place, Sir,*" he added, in a mournful tone, "there are no gentlefolks to look after the people."

"It strikes me, my friend, that you want a resident clergyman as much as a resident gentry. The Dean, I understand, is not here more than a third of the year, and he keeps no curate."

My neighbour answered nothing, and I could see he did not wish to be too free to open his mind to a stranger on this point.

"Have you got any schools?" I asked.

"Yes, there is one for girls; it is kept in the Post Office, opposite the Crown, mayhap you noticed it. It's a charity school."

"Is there not one for boys also?"

"There are a few boys, I believe, go to be taught in a back kitchen at the Dean's."

"There they must have the advantage of Dr. Cockburn's personal superintendence," thought I. However, my friend gave me to understand that the Dean left it all to the master.

"The girls are better taught," added my informant; "the boys are ——"

"Better *fed*, I suppose, being in the kitchen," I interposed, for I confess I was a little tickled with the pursuit of knowledge amongst frying pans, and the chance of the young urchins taking the tithe out of a plum pudding on its passage to the rectory table, or insisting on a modus from the Dean's leg of mutton and turinps.

"No," replied my neighbour, not acknowledging, even with a smile, my smart saying; "no, they aint—the boys aint good for much."

"Then the post office," thought I, "for education beats the Dean's kitchen all to nothing."

"Are you always left to chance clergymen when the Dean is at York or Devonshire?" (for there is a Bank belonging to the family in the latter county, and Dr. Cockburn often goes down there.)

"No; there used to be old Dr. Symonds, who came (I think he said from some place a couple of miles off) pretty regularly for a time, but the Dean got him something, and he is gone."

The bells now began to ring, so I went into the Church, and up to the two boys who were pulling the ropes in the basement story of the tower, which opens into the nave, while the clerk looked on.

"Who preaches here to-day, friend?" said I, addressing myself to the latter.

"I'm not sure, Sir, but I believe he's a Mister Ta-ayler. He has only been here two Sundays; he do come from Bath. He's in bad health, I believe, for we do hardly hear him."

While we were speaking the parish choir entered, it consisted of a flute and fiddler. The fiddler placed his fiddle against the wall, and, with his hat on, amused himself for a while in pulling the bell rope.

"That's the clergyman, Sir," said the clerk, pointing to a feeble old gentleman, with black smalls and continuations of the same colour, who had just entered; and toiling to the reading desk, across which a surplice (none of the cleanest) was lying, he began to put it on.

I entered a pew at hand, and proceeded to count the

congregation. There were two young women in the chancel; an old pauper, with blue coat and white buttons, an agricultural labourer, your humble servant, and a farmer and his daughter in the nave; and in the gallery another agricultural labourer, the first flute and the fiddle: after service had commenced another person and four or five of the aforesaid school children entered, and this completed the congregation, making in all something more than a dozen.

The Bath subsidy (poor old gentleman) was, God knows, weak enough, for he had hardly physical strength to go through the prayers; he began the wrong psalms, and was corrected by the clerk, and upon the whole it struck me that he ought rather to be in bed than in the reading desk. "He never will be able to get through the sermon," thought I, after the second singing; but my mind was soon set at rest on this score by his reading the Prayer for the Church Militant, and dismissing us with a blessing, and without a sermon. On the whole we were hardly an hour in Church.

"Dean of York, Dean of York!" said I, as I drew aside amongst the graves, to look at the little handful of worshippers (about a dozen, and that in a parish of considerable dimensions) who came out at the porch, "Dean of York, this will not do. Who can wonder that there is dissent and dissatisfaction in some places, when you, a dignitary of the Church, leave the congregation committed to your charge in such a plight? Two-thirds of the year in York or Devonshire, there is nobody during your long absence to look after the people, save some chance stranger, who finds his way from the neighbouring city, to read prayers on Sunday. During the rest of the week who is there to visit the sick? who to attend to the children? who to attend to the people? who to watch over the morals of the place? Go to the rectory, it is closed; enquire for the curate, there is none. And what is the result? Enter the little Church on Sunday, and your heart sinks to see the two or three that are gathered together, and dismissed without a word of advice or admonition. Dean of York!

Dean of York! it must have struck you, I am sure, ere this, that the sacred profession has its solemn obligations as well as its emoluments; and how can you reconcile it with a strict sense of duty to go away for months together from your charge, and leave no resident minister to attend to them? If your duties imperatively call you to York, why not give up Kelston to some of the numerous young clergymen who are ready and willing to work, and devote all their energies to its well-being. To you, already so highly enriched from the Establishment; to you, the dignified and well paid head of the magnificent Minster of the ancient capital of England, a simple rustic parish of Somersetshire cannot certainly be an object; or if you will persist in drawing its emoluments, and must still absent yourself, then, in the name of God, why not get a curate to look after the people you cannot look after yourself? Is it too much to ask you, rolling in riches derived from the Church, to pay seventy or eighty pounds a year for a curate, instead of having any cheap chance man you can pick up in Bath to do Sunday duty for you, while the poor people themselves feel their spiritual destitution, and pathetically tell their tale of distress to the stranger that enters their sequestered village—"*It is sadly neglected.*" Dean of York! Dean of York! it is for you, a dignitary of the Church, rather to set the example of spiritual energy and superintendence, than to turn your back for six months together on the poor people of Kelston. What can we say to Radicals, what can we say to Dissenters, when they point out such a case as this? And how can we complain of curates who are not as active as they ought to be, when we hear of the Very Rev. Dr. Cockburn going away at the beginning of summer, and not returning till the beginning of winter; and when we visit his Church, finding a dozen people only collected to hear some stranger, whose name even they do not know, and who gets through the prayers with difficulty, and dismisses them without a sermon?

But I am out of breath. I some time ago saw an account of a discussion between the Dean of York and Dr.

Buckland on the Mosaic history of the creation, with a world and all about geology, stratifications, and the like; I therefore conclude that the high-flying Dean is so occupied with *all* Creation, that he cannot find sufficient leisure from his stupendous care to look as minutely as he could wish after that particular little spot in Somersetshire out of which he receives some hundreds a year in tithes, that

> "Born for the universe, he can't narrow his mind,
> And to Kelston give up what is meant for mankind."

Be this as it may, however, if I were he I should sink cosmogony for a while and return to my country living: I'd let the earth take care of itself as it has done for six thousand years, and take care of my parish. He may depend upon it that, if Moses were alive, the great lawgiver would much sooner see him attending to Kelston, than even defending his account of the creation.

I asked the clerk how old Kelston Church was. He said he did not exactly know, but mayhap it was five hundred years. As I cannot myself, any more than my friend, be precise as to half a century or so, I shall not speculate upon its age; it has, however, a considerable character of rude antiquity about it, but it possesses in other respects little or no interest for the architect or antiquarian; it is small and plain, of a single aisle and chancel, with a little gallery at the west end. Several of the old family from the adjacent manor house,

> "The Hawkins,
> Without their shoes or stockings"

lie there. The mansion is now untenanted, and belongs to Mr. Joseph Neeld, or Neild, a Member of Parliament for some place or another, who neither lets it nor lives in it; and I believe there are no resident gentry besides to look after the parish, or take an interest in the inhabitants, who seem, poor people, on the whole to have little to attach them to the soil.

THE DEAN OF YORK AND KELSTON.

We [Ed. *B. T.*] have received the following letter from the Very Rev. Dr. Cockburn, Dean of York, on the subject referred to by our old correspondent, the Church Goer, about a fortnight since. As the matter is wholly out of our editorial province, we have taken the liberty of placing it before the party with whom the statement originated, and who, it will be seen, has appended some remarks.

"TO THE EDITOR OF THE BRISTOL TIMES.

York Deanery, August 29, 1846.

"Sir,—I was sorry to see my name introduced before the public in the *Bristol Times*, wherein I am represented as not duly performing my duty as Rector of Kelston.

"The letter writer states some facts which are partly true, but which being grossly exaggerated become false. He says, 'that I left Kelston in May;' whereas I left it late in June. He says, 'that I usually return about Christmas;' whereas I uniformly return early in October. He states, 'that I reside at Kelston three or four months in a year;' whereas for fourteen years have I never failed to reside there eight months, and sometimes nine.

"Dr. Stedman, who has lived on the edge of the parish, has been my curate many years; but an unexpected opportunity having occurred of introducing him among the vicars choral at York, we have had recourse for the three last Sundays to the services of Mr. Taylor. Dr. Stedman is now returned, and will again take charge of the parish for a little while.

"I make no comment on the ribaldry about the boys going to school in the Dean's kitchen; I wish only to correct the misstatement as to the facts, and being really proud of my parishioners at Kelston, (whatever they may be of their pastor) it would grieve me much to be thought neglectful of their welfare.

"I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient Servant,

WM. COCKBURN, Rector of Kelston.

"P. S.—I beg of you to publish this letter, and to send me a copy of the paper in which it is published."

Believe me, Mr. Dean, that as a Churchman I should have been rejoiced had your letter, above printed, demolished all the statements in my short paper on your rural rectory of Kelston. But you will excuse me for saying, (what probably has struck the reader ere this) that it is not as candid, as ingenuous and unreserved a letter as ought to come from you, or such an one as can clear your name from every suspicion of neglect in connection with your little country Church. You say, "my letter stated some *facts* which were partly *true*, but which being grossly exaggerated become *false*." I shall not stop to canvass the curious logic of this sentence, but observe that as my whole paper was a tissue of complaints, if as you admit it contains "some facts," and is partly true, you have still much to explain and answer. For my part I will, without any reservation, declare that the account of my visit, so far as I am concerned, was perfectly true; all I said I saw, I saw—all I said I heard, I heard. There were not more than a dozen in the Church, counting myself; the prayers were read by some feeble old stranger from Bath, who gave us no sermon; complaints, piteous complaints, were made to me of neglect; the Dean, I was told, was away the greater part of the year, that there was no resident curate, and that strangers came from Bath or elsewhere in the Rector's absence to do duty.

The Dean now says, that "Dr. Stedman, who has lived on the *edge of the parish*, has been my curate for many years." You will excuse an old man's warmth, Dean of York, but I will say this fencing with facts is unworthy a man of your standing in the Church. Dr. Stedman does not live on the edge of the parish of Kelston; he lives, or did live, in the parish of Weston, and nearer the Abbey of Bath than the Church of Kelston; his residence, I am instructed, was more than two miles from the latter. Besides, though Dr. Stedman has been in the habit of doing occasional duty for you for years, he has never, I am informed, been licensed as your curate, and I am sure could never have considered himself more than a mere Sunday substitute, as I am convinced Dr. Stedman would not have

consented to consider himself Curate of Kelston, and yet live away in another parish, merely visiting his nominal charge in the absence of the Rector.

I do not, I assure Dean Cockburn, stick to my own statement through any motive of pride or obstinacy, for, as I said before, I should be rejoiced to find that I was wrong; but I have made further inquiries since I received his letter, and I cannot sacrifice candour to any motive of complacency; I am assured by those acquainted with the parish, that the case is worse than I described it, and that it has been the Dean's practice to "hire clergymen for Sunday duty" in his absence. So little did they know of the clergyman who officiated on the day of my visit, that even the clerk was not quite sure as to his name; and then there had been a Mr. Griffiths a few Sundays before him. Now, we are told, "Dr. Stedman is returned, and will take charge of the parish for a little while." *"A little while!"* Is this the defence that the Dean of York and the Rector of Kelston ought to be able to make? Is this the kind of denial he ought to have been in a position to give to a charge of neglect? Is this the way the cure of immortal souls in a considerable parish ought to be attended to? The Rector absent during the summer in York; Dr. Stedman (of whose worth I am well aware) living in another parish, not licensed to this, and only so far as a few services were concerned connected with it; then, in Dr. Stedman's absence, Mr. Griffiths, Mr. Taylor, or Mr. anybody else, riding over in a fly from Bath, and giving them a hurried service in the morning without any sermon! Is this the way I repeat, firmly but respectfully, Mr. Dean, to attach the people to the Church? Is this the way that the parochial clergy of England can hope to entwine around them and their religion the affections of their simple flocks? Is this the way that the people are to be taught to preserve their ancestral reverence for the old country parish Church, and never to transfer their allegiance to the square, raw, round-windowed dissenting house, echoing throughout the Sunday with at least the *sounds* of worship, that rises close by it? To make matters worse,

too, Dr. Stedman, never the licensed Curate of Kelston, is now admitted amongst the Vicars Choral of York, so that Dean and Doctor may happen to be both "in the north" at the same time,

"When they should serve *their* Sovereign in the south."

The Dean says, he "is proud of his parishioners (whatever they be of their pastor)." To assist him to a conclusion on the latter clause, I will tell him an incident which came under my own notice as late as Tuesday last: I was passing in through the *Bristol Times*' publishing office, for the purpose of seeing my friend the editor, on the subject of this letter, when my attention was attracted by a sturdy-looking countryman inquiring for a paper containing the "account about Kelston Church." Curiosity, and it may be a particle of self-conceit, made me cock my ears. "Ah," said the rustic to the person in the office, "if the gentleman had come over only a Sunday or so afore he'd ha' found the churchyard full of calves." "It be all monstrous true," he continued, after a moment's pause, "and Mr. Nailde (Neeld) was over with us since, and bloawed up about the state of the place a good un, and 'ferred to what the Church Goer ha' put on the payper about it, and said he had a good mind to come and live at the manor house hisself—wish he would though. He did visit the Church too and churchyard, and tell us to trim up the roses." In short, without putting a single question to the man, I collected from him that the opinion not only of the simple people themselves, but of Mr. Joseph Neeld, who is the lord of the manor and manor house, and as such must have opportunities abundant of judging of the state of the parish, fully coincided with mine. If this be not the case, and the good people and Mr. Neeld think it worth their while they can contradict me; or, perhaps, the Dean would prefer that I should ride over on John Bunyan, and confront him at a public meeting of his parishioners, and take the sense of the good folks themselves on the subject.

I trust the Dean of York is too much of a courtier (and

it is too much of a courtier he is), not to excuse the honest bluntness of an old pilgrim, who still means and wishes to be respectful to him as a gentleman, a minister, and a dignitary of the Church. I sought for no accusation against him, but I was bound to give facts as I found them; and instead of the high position which he occupies in the Church giving him a right to claim protection against publicity and candour, I think it makes him more amenable to both, inasmuch as an omission of duty from an high quarter is the most culpable. Had, for instance, a man with a large family and small means (though this would be far from justifying neglect), the parish of Kelston, he might plead incapacity to keep a curate; but for the Dean of York, already so deeply indebted to the Church for rich emoluments, to leave a country parish, from which he is absent, according to his own admission, one-third of the year, without a regular curate, merely on the grounds of economy, is more than we have patience for. Pluralism, never an amiable system, becomes intolerable under such circumstances. The Church suffers by it; and when the Church suffers by the hands of its dignitaries, what can we expect from its subordinates?

It is no foolish and weak feeling of self-conceit or self-glory (for I should be unfit for the work I have taken upon myself if I were actuated by so unworthy and comtemptible a motive,) that I say, I am glad that the observations I felt reluctantly compelled to offer on his parish have reached the Dean of York, and that he has shown himself not indifferent to them; for his wish to clear himself shows he is not insensible of his responsibility, his awful responsibility; and I do hope better things for the future. Because matters have not been all that a zealous Churchman could wish them in the past, is no reason why they may not be amended. The Dean of York may give up Kelston to some hard-working man; or if he will not, he may get some hard-working, conscientious, resident curate to assist him; and thus show himself not merely "proud" but careful "of his parishioners at Kelston." As I said before, I believe the Church (if the clergy will do their duty,)

must ever continue enthroned in the hearts of the people of this country; and if a poor old pilgrim can excite the latter to a little more diligence, though others may blame him, he cannot, in his conscience, blame himself, or consider that the end of an old man's life has been altogether useless.

P. S. I have instructed the Editor of the *Bristol Times* to remit a paper to the Deanery.

Preliminary Note from the Church-Goer.

Some time ago I paid a short visit to Glastonbury, arriving on Saturday evening and remaining over Sunday, when I visited on the evening of my arrival the Abbey, and on the following day the Churches. I intended to have made one paper of them, but I find that the Abbey has by itself occupied more than the usual space allotted to such articles; I shall, therefore, defer the Churches until a future occasion.

Glastonbury Abbey.

The novel writer of the nineteenth century, who does not wish to keep you long *in limine*, generally begins by telling you, that at the close of a summer's day a solitary horseman was seen riding slowly along some picturesque road, which led to some picturesque village. But what is fashionable in fiction was true, in fact, on the present occasion; for had you been on Wearyall Hill, which overlooks the little town of Glastonbury, on a certain Saturday evening, not many weeks since, and just as the sun, full and red, was setting in the waters of the Bristol Channel, you might have seen me and John climbing over the same steep road, up which Joseph of Arimathea, by the aid of his miraculous staff, is generally supposed to have toiled some eighteen hundred years ago.

The natives of the "Isle of Apples" have all learned religiously to believe every word of the tradition; and I should not advise the sojourner, if he would be treated hospitably, to question a word of the legend; but the stranger will probably and naturally inquire, what brought Joseph of Arimathea from Jerusalem to Somersetshire.

How he came, considering the Oriental Steam Packet Company were not then in existence, I am not prepared to inform you; but come he did, at least so write the antiquarians, and so swore the monks, and having taken Wearyall Hill in his way, he sat down on the summit to rest himself, and there and then planted his staff, which incontinenly put forth leaves; and hence the Holy Thorn, which buds regularly at Christmas and Midsummer—or rather, I should say, budded, for we must speak now of St. Joseph's walking-stick in the past tense; as some one, suiting the act to the word, walked off with it a couple of centuries ago. It presented a double trunk, and certainly a singular phenomenon, until the time of Queen Elizabeth; when some diabolical Puritan, as the indictments say, "instigated by the Devil," proceeded to hew it down, and so far effected his purpose as to cut through one trunk, and was about to sever the second in a similar way, when he cut his leg with the axe; and an indignant chip flying from the mutilated tree at the same time, knocked out his eye, and obliged him to desist; and the reader will say, served the sacrilegious rascal right. The remaining portion of the thorn stood for years, and was held in such holy repute that many performed long pilgrimages to inscribe their names on the bark; and the Bristol merchants, who from immemorial time always kept their one eye open for every opportunity of turning an honest penny, whether it be in tittlers or holy thorns, are said to have made much money by exporting its blossoms and selling them at a high price to the faithful in foreign lands. There is nothing very strange in their making a traffic of Joseph of Arimathea's blackthorn; 'tis only a mercy they did not lay hold on Joseph of Arimathea's bones, for they'd have retailed them by avoirdupois weight with equal indifference, and to a dead certainty. The second and sole remaining limb of the sacred tree was cut down during the troubles of Charles the First, by some preaching soldier, the holy thorn having on this occasion failed to vindicate its hallowed character, or punish its sacrilegious assailant as formerly. Fortunately, however, some grafts of it had been previously made, and several miracu-

lous offshoots of St. Joseph's staff may now, and at Christmas again, be seen flourishing in various gardens about Glastonbury. I took several sprigs from one on the hill behind the Church myself, to see if so Catholic a relic would condescend to grow for one who cannot plead ignorance to the Confessions of Augsburgh, and subscribes to the Thirty-nine Articles as far as he understands them.

The whole tale of Joseph of Arimathea and his staff may be called in question by such zealous confessors as my friend the Reverend Baptist Noel, but the thorn itself cannot be unsaid; there it still stands, furnishing a singular or seeming foundation for an interesting and fanciful legend.* An eminent historian of the last century, speaking of the discipline of the Egyptian monks, says, on the authority of the "Vita Patrum," or its editor, the Jesuit Rosweyde (I think) that as an exercise of their patience, "they were directed to water a barren staff that was planted in the ground, until at the end of three years it should vegetate and blossom like a tree." This anecdote has recurred to me as somewhat curiously associated with that of the Holy Thorn, and perhaps suggesting some solution of the seeming miracle. With regard to the tale of the Puritan cutting his leg, I think the original will be found among the wonders of pagan mythology, in the judgment which is said to have befallen the sacrilegious ancient, who met with a similar mishap in trying to sever the sacred olive of Minerva at Athens, as told, I think, in Potter's *Archealogia*.

Still this does not answer the question, "what brought Joseph of Arimathea into Somersetshire?" nor can I, so you must find a solution for yourself, good reader: all *I* know is that there are a great many ancient and learned authorities for it, none of which I ever read, or mean to read. However, this I do know, that there has been a singular publication just put forth by the Hon and Rev. A. Percival, in which he attempts to prove that Ireland is the Patmos of St. John, and the scene of his Revelations; that the beloved disciple was banished to Ireland; that he took

* The whole mystery may be accounted for by the thorn being of Eastern origin.—*E. B. T.*

with him to that Island the Virgin Mary (who, according to him, is buried under the Hall of Tara there), and that St. Joseph of Arimathea accompanied the holy party in their exile, and embarked for the place of saints and scholars from the port of Bristol, having previously visited Glastonbury. It was in this visit, no doubt, that the hallowed pilgrims paused to rest on the top of Wearyall hill, when the alleged miracle occurred.*

All this I had in my mind as I rode over the scene of this celebrated legend, and looked to the point where the Holy Thorn is reputed to have stood, and the Holy Pilgrims to have rested, I indulged in a day dream, only such as young boys and old men give way to, and pictured to myself the little group of sacred wanderers, seated by some knoll on the lone hill, and watching the declining of the sun, as it set on some such evening as the present, towards that island which they had chosen for their exile. I must be pardoned for my illusions, for the evening, the scene, and surrounding objects all encouraged them.

Riding along that old, and I have no doubt, Roman road, is like riding along some bold natural platform (which the ridge in fact is,) from which you have on both sides, and in the front and rear, boundless and beautiful views. On my right, between me and the little tower of Street Church, which peeped up modestly and almost

* I can give a singular passage from page 5 of this extraordinary book:—"If we were without other witnesses of the Gospel in Ireland having come from St. John, the silent but irrefragable testimony of the clusters of seven churches, scattered throughout Ireland, as at Arranmore, Clonmacnoise, Glendalough, Inch Clorice, Innis Caltra, Rattoe, Scattery, and Troy Island, do of themselves sufficiently declare it. For by whom, let the most dispassionate person say, by whom is it reasonable to conclude that those clusters of seven churches were founded, but by the disciples of the blessed Apostle, in grateful and affectionate remembrance of him to whom was vouchsafed the vision of revelation. But more than this; seeing that the beloved Apostle had disciples in Asia Minor and in France, and that, *as far as yet appears*, no similar clusters of seven churches are there to be met with, does not their peculiar existence in Ireland imply something further, namely, that Ireland was the very spot in which the revelation was vouchsafed to him, and not the Isle of Patmos, in the Ægean sea, as is generally supposed?"

timidly from amongst its trees, was a broad expanse of meadows, watered by the river Brue, and in front the bold Torr; while in the intervening valley, nestling amongst orchards, lay the little town of Glastonbury, with what remains of "Ancient England's glory," its Abbey, raising its few ivied but sublime fragments above and amongst all.

I rode up the quiet street, and returned the salutations of a few civil shopkeepers, who, despairing of, or indifferent to, more custom for that day, lounged over their half-doors; John, with a natural instinct which I could not too much admire, turned of his own accord under the escutcheoned and sculptured gateway of the old *Pilgrim's Inn*, merely squinting up as he passed at the figure of Charity and the two Cæsars, as if to see he had made no mistake. I call it the Pilgrim's Inn, for it was anciently the *Hospitium* for the reception of such votaries and visitors, to the Shrine of the Virgin, as could not be accommodated within the walls of the Abbey. From this, however, it must not be imagined that the ancient inn knew aught of such modern barbarisms as bills and "boots." No; the abbot (if it was not an anti-Protestant prayer I'd say "Peace to his Ashes") paid for all; it was, in fact, a kind of out door addendum to the Abbey itself, and entailed no such formality on the eve of departure as pulling the bell for the *carte*, or having such inappropriate expectants on poor pilgrims as pretty chambermaids in quilled caps: all you had to do on your arrival was to send your compliments across to the great cellarer for a bottle of his best Rhenish, with an intimation that he was to put it down to his Excellency the Abbot. And then how delightful, when the setting sun was gilding the glorious pile on the opposite side of the street, and its golden rays streaming on croketted pinnacle and pointed arch, to sit in the oriel window of your inn, and drink to the memory of their Patron Saint, Dunstan's victory over the Devil, and all the time know that it cost you nothing. Add the vesper bell and the distant echo of the vesper hymn; and if you can draw a picture of monastic times more pleasant and comfortable, you have my permission

to do so. I can myself, I confess, imagine nothing more suitable to my moderate means than the bygone ages of roast beef and bottles of Rhenish, and no bills to pay.

How it came to be called the George I am sure I don't know; I far prefer the Pilgrim, as there is not a name in the calendar for which I have a more sublime contempt than for his fighting saintship. He was imported into this country by the Crusaders, though how the Cappadocian rogue, who robbed the Roman commissariat, became the patron of English chivalry, I can't conceive. He was at best but a compound of army contractor, undertaker, and pork-butcher, until he became the Archbishop of Alexandria, and a base Arian dealer in bacon mounted the orthodox throne of the immortal Athanasius.*

The George or Pilgrim's Inn, though still preserving externally the ancient and picturesque appearance which it possessed in the days of abbatical glory and greatness, has been lately almost wholly modernized inside. Having dined with my old and excellent friend Mrs. B., of Northover, I contented myself with a cup of souchong, on my arrival at "mine own inn," and which, for old association

* To show that I don't draw upon my own imagination for the character of St. George, who ought to be kicked out of the calendar, I quote a part of his biography from an eminent authority:—"George, from his parents or education, surnamed the Cappadocian, was born at Epiphania, in Celicia, in a fuller's shop. From his obscure and servile origin he raised himself by the talents of a parasite; and the patrons whom he assiduously flattered, procured for their worthless dependant a lucrative commission or contract to supply the army with bacon. His employment was mean: he rendered it infamous. He accumulated wealth by the basest acts of fraud and corruption; but his malversations were so notorious that George was compelled to escape from the pursuit of justice. * * The rival of Athanasius was dear and sacred to the Arians, and the seeming aversion of their sectarians introduced his worship into the bosom of the Catholic Church. The odious stranger, disguising every circumstance of time and place, assumed the mask of a martyr, a saint, and a Christian hero, and the infamous George of Cappadocia has been transformed into the renowned St. George of England, the patron of England and of the Garter."—*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. iii., chap. 23. The dragon's genealogy or origin I am not at all acquainted with; the monster, however, is upon the whole more respectable than the man.

sake, I partook of in the oriel window of the little parlour to the left as you enter: having finished my "evening's entertainment," and sent my slippers and night-cap to the kitchen fire, and given some instructions about the airing of my bed, which was to be ready by my return, I proceeded to the Abbey.

Goodness knows, my wants and enjoyments are of a very limited and sober character, yet I think I could not live my life contentedly out in a small country town, to look upon the same few front doors from morning till evening, to see the same wares in the windows of the same small general shops, to know the face of every native and knocker, and to go out to tea with the twelve "social families" of the town in horrible rotation, until I became acquainted with the precise pattern of every cup and saucer in the place. I see little or no company; yet I like to feel that I live in the midst of a crowd of all classes, where a man's individuality, like the drop in the river, is unseen in the multitude of his fellow men, for I may say with Lord Dudley and Ward, in one of his lively and gentlemanly letters to the Bishop of Llandaff, "I am one to whom the busy hum of man is hardly ever importunate."* A few people lounged about the door-posts, but they were few; and some three or four elderly spinsters were indulging in an evening walk, but these, with myself, constituted the population abroad.

I was told the key was at the White Hart, where for the sum of sixpence prompt payment, I obtained admission to the Abbey, having first passed through a stable and a cabbage garden. I have often heard that there was but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous, from the ridiculous to the sublime in the present case might have been more than a dozen, for after crossing a short pathway the scanty but still majestic ruins of the Great Church and Joseph of Arimathea's Chapel burst full upon my view.

Reader, I'm afraid to say how many books and the multitude of accounts that have been written about Glas-

* Letter xxxviii.

tonbury Abbey. There is my late poor school fellow, the Rev. Richard Warner, published a history, with an introduction twice as long as the text, at the moderate price of four guineas, Charles Eyston having printed another anterior to it; Collison has something to say on the subject; Dugdale is not mute; Willis, in his Abbeys, will be found communicative enough, and if you want any confirmation of these men, you may have a cart load of old lay and clerical authorities at the King's Library, in the British Museum. You will, therefore, excuse my troubling you, or what is more important myself, with its annals, especially as I have nothing but a vague and general notion of a long line of Abbots floating through my head. My mind is a kind of *camera obscura* on the subject, but nothing distinct or clearly defined; I fancy I read somewhere that Joseph of Arimathea, as I before informed you, was the first founder of a shrine (formed of wattles and wild beasts' skins) to the Blessed Virgin. The interval between this and the accession of St. Dunstan I must leave to your own ingenuity to fill up, merely observing that Saints Patrick, Phauanus, and Diruvianus, will be found on the list. Somewhere adjoining, though not in the Abbey, is the cave, if it could only be discovered, where that memorable passage of arms took place, between Dunstan and the Devil, when the latter got his nose severely pinched between a pair of kitchen tongs, for his troublesome and intrusive propensities. If the people of Glastonbury had been a little more enterprising, they would long ago have dug a cave expressly to suit the tradition, and sticking a board with "DUNSTAN'S HERMITAGE" over the door, shown the indentions of his Satanic Majesty's hoofs, and the precise pair of tongs employed in the struggle, at the small charge of one shilling a head. I marvel much that the idea did not strike that ingenious gentleman John Down, who sold saints and confessors by the cart load, to the parish authorities, to be hammered into powder pavement for the high roads.

Mrs. Trimmer will tell you all about Dunstan's quarrel with Edwin, and his atrocity to Queen Elgiva; for Dun-

stan was a declared foe to the ladies, and the first to deprive the priests of those domestic comforts called wives. After a long line of noteless names comes that of Henry de Blois, brother of King Stephen, who was one of its best and most brilliant benefactors. There is now a great gap in my memory until I come to Peter de Marci, a monk of Cluni, who was Abbot at the end of the 12th century, and whom we mainly recollect as having the misfortune to hold that office when the principal part of the pile was burnt down, though I believe he cannot, like Justice Maule, lay claim to the honour of being the incendiary himself; by the generosity of Henry the Second, however, and their own wide lands, it was rebuilt in greater state than ever, and so beautified and enlarged by subsequent Abbots, as at last to become pre-eminent amongst the Abbatical buildings of England.* The eloquent and quarrelsome Roger Forde, who was always waging an ecclesiastical warfare with the Bishops of Wells, next occurs to my mind, though now I bethink me he succeeded one Michael of Ambersbury, whose best services to the Abbey consisted in paying its debts, a merit as prized and rare in those days, it seems, as in ours, since they deemed it sufficiently remarkable to be recorded on his tomb. Adam de Sodbury governed Glastonbury about the middle of the 14th century, and was decidedly of a mechanical taste and turn, since it was under his superintendence that Peter Lightfoot constructed the curious clock which was purchased or purloined by the Dean and Chapter of Wells.

I cannot recall at this moment any more Abbots until the last, but not least, Richard Whiting, who was murdered by Henry the Eighth, that his Majesty might more conveniently rob the Monastery afterwards. Having refused to surrender the house to Henry, visitors, or rather spies

* The visitors in their letter to Lord Privy Seal say, after seeing Glastonbury, "We assure your Lordship that it is the goodliest house of that sort that we have seen. We would that your Lordship would judge it a house mete for the King's Majesty, and no one else; which is to our great comfort, for we trust of a verity that there shall never come any double hood within that house again."

and false swearers, were sent down to seek a cause of accusation against him and his establishment, and finding none, they hung him and two or three others, for their innocence, on the top of Tor Hill, within sight of the glorious structure which he himself had contributed to beautify; and it must be confessed that Abbot Whiting's last look forth on the world, as

> "He glanced on tower, and tree, and plain,
> As what he ne'er should see again,"

was an extensive and noble one, though he was in no mood to enjoy the prospect. The old man would have fain breathed his last within his own abbey walls; but they would not grant him this slight favour, nor permit even his ashes to rest there. The same evening on which this bloody tragedy was enacted amongst the peaceful orchards and monuments of monastic repose, the grim head of the last of the Abbots was fixed, a ghastly spectacle, on the grand gate of the Abbey; the vesper bell was silent, and the vesper hymn was hushed, the hearth was quenched in the great kitchen, the refectory was a solitude, the almonry closed, and the few monks who were not fugitives crouching each by his *priez Dieu*,* were, perhaps, petitioning their patron saint, or happily heaven, for deliverance. Bath, Wells, Bridgwater, and Ilchester, had each a quarter of the poor Abbot as a royal present, and the Duke of Somerset something more substantial, in the shape of the lion's share of the broad possessions of the Abbey, which in those days possessed a revenue of nearly £300,000 a year.

Two of the most early names of Glastonbury were of ancient British origin, and signified, the one "The still retreat," the other "The abode near the river," each picturesque and poetic enough in itself. It was subsequently called "Avalon," or the Isle of Orchards, a title to which it can still lay a very palpable and potent claim, for each

* A little desk for solitary prayer and reading, with which each cell was furnished.

house seems built within a grove of apple trees, and washed with a rivulet of cider. It is just the place, according to Dr. Johnson, to rear up a long line of children cheaply; for Dr. Maxwell informs us that the great moralist advised him, if possible, "to have a good orchard; as he knew, he said, a clergyman, of small income, who brought up a family very respectably, which he chiefly fed on apple dumplings!" a hint which I hope will not be lost on my clerical friends, who would do well to plant a "king's pippin" for every new comer.

Now, it is all very well to talk of Glastonbury, but one peep at it is worth columns of description, which I don't intend, or rather pretend, good reader, to treat you to. For my part, though I saw it many years ago, I think it had on this occasion all the effect of vastness and grandeur as fresh as ever for me. The great Church, including the retro-chapel, which was, in fact, used as the Chapter House with Joseph of Arimathea's, was according to old records 594 feet in length, east and west, being considerably more than any cathedral in England, even including Canterbury and Ely.* Stand in the nave, or rather on the site of the nave, and trace in your mind's eye (which any one acquainted with ecclesiastical proportions may do) the outlines of the original structure, and see then if you do not regard its vastness and grandeur with a kind of awful incredulity; the stately remnants of arches, the deeply recessed and richly ornamented door-ways that yet remain, will aid your fancy in forming something like a remote idea of its sublimity; and then, if you have imagination enough to fill up the picture with painted windows and tessalated pavements, groined roof and glorious vista of "long drawn aisle," you may perhaps form an imperfect estimate of "Ancient England's glory."

It was yet a bright and early twilight, barely sufficient to throw a mellowed tint over the ruins, and as I loitered

* It certainly beats Solomon's Temple, which though it was surrounded with courts and porticoes, was, that part of it at least appropriated to the worship of God, only 110 feet in length; according to Prideaux a mere parish church.

about each old column and archway, I became so imbued as it were with the monastic spirit, that, if it were not that I kept honest Martin Luther in my mind to charm away all poetic and Popish fancies, I don't know into what a reverence for monks and friars, who built such glorious fanes, I might have been seduced; besides, I was doubly fortified with the Rev. Edward Parker's sermon on Baptismal Regeneration, as by way of a salutary preventative I carried "the Protestant Vicar of Stoke Gifford" with me in my pocket.

By the North wall of the choir there is an empty stone coffin, which once contained the four bones and surrounding flesh of an Abbot: some how or another I got it into my head that I should like to fit myself into this grim receptacle, so I actually and absolutely lay down in what once held the festering remains of some monkish dignitary; and here I gave full scope to my imagination, until I had again raised the pile in its pristine grandeur and pride, and filled its long drawn aisles with echoes of evening chaunts, and solemn processions of hooded monks; and I had already commenced Congreve's description of the Temple in the *Mourning Bride*—

> "How reverend is the face of this tall pile,
> Whose ancient pillars rear their sculptured heads,
> To bear aloft its arched and ponderous roof,"

when I was disturbed by a troop of girls, who came rollicking round what was once the North transept, with some three or four young men, whom I must, I suppose, call sweethearts, and who immediately commenced walking for a wager blindfolded, from St. Joseph's Chapel towards the choir, an experiment which at length led to a controversy, and to my involuntary appointment as umpire. Things being settled to their satisfaction, they soon after left me to my meditations and musings.

There are some lines on Glastonbury Abbey by the Rev. Canon Bowles, and quoted by Warner, which thus begin—

"Glory and boast of Alavon's fair isle,
How beautiful thine ancient turrets rose.
Fancy yet sees thee in the sunshine pale
Gleaming: or more majestic in repose,
When west away, the crimson landscape glows,
Casting their shadows in the waters wide.
How sweet the sounds that at still daylight's close
Came blended with the airs of eventide,
When through the glimmering aisle faint MISERERES died."

And certainly there is something in these, and many other abbatical ruins, which makes one, however devout a son of the Reformation he may be, feel a transitory regret in contemplating the silent and solemn fragments which once resounded with chaunt and Litany, and sheltered the shorn head of many a hooded scholar. Nevertheless, there is an elastic common sense which ever returns to chase this fanciful morbidness, and recalls us from the illusive idolatry of mighty though mouldering monuments of men's art and devotion, to the beneficent and eternal works of an Almighty Architect. Gibbon observes with truth, after describing with enthusiasm the Cathedral of St. Sophia, built by Justinian, "Yet how dull is the artificer, how insignificant is the labour, if it be compared with the formation of the vilest insect that crawls upon the surface of the temple."

A huge white owl came flapping its heavy wings out of Joseph of Arimathea's Chapel before I thought of quitting the ruins of the great Church, which, however, was only *in transitu* to the Abbot's kitchen, which, as the monument of eating always endures longer than that for praying, is at this moment almost in perfect repair. It is true it was nearly the last work of poor Whiting, who barely escaped from having one of his own four quarters roasted there, and is built with great solidity, being an octagonal structure, with a stone roof of the same form, and terminating in a curious kind of double lanthorn. No savour, however, of venison pasty or roast sirloins remained, though were I the Misses Naish, or the present proprietor, which is the same thing, I should for auld lang syne, or for the sake of giving it once more a smack of vivers, have a Southdown haunch cooked there some day, to which I should be most happy to

accept an invitation, as I have no doubt, from the prompt courtesy with which they permitted me to have the keys, of experiencing a hospitality commensurate with the occasion. In 1667 (curious transition) the Quakers hired it for a meeting house, and the rattle of saucepans was succeeded by the silence of friends. I noticed a string descending from the lanthorn, when my cicerone informed me that the ladies of Glastonbury, and gentlemen too, I suppose, at one time used the kitchen for occasional balls and suppers when the string in question was made to sustain a branch full of short sixes, to the light of which the beauties danced till day break.

Near this town are the ruins of the little belfry which called the poor to the Almonry, and these with what I have already referred to, and the Barn, and the Abbot's Fishing House at Mere, are all that remain of the princely and glorious Abbey of Glastonbury; time and Mr. John Down, who, according to the inscription on his tomb in the churchyard, was forty years owner of the Abbey, having done all they could to obliterate the outlines of that noble pile. As I said before, Mr. Down sold the *débris* of the monastery by the ton, for the purpose of repairing the roads: fine corbels and capitals were accordingly ground under cart wheels, and it is generally supposed that the Minor Prophets and Twelve Apostles are at this moment employed in propping up pigsties, that a number of Saints have been built up in a boundary wall, and that a garden gate now swings on the head and shoulders of Michael the Archangel.

Under the Chapel of Joseph of Arimathea was the entrance of a passage which led to the Torr, so we are told at least; for my part, however, while I could make the journey in the blessed sunshine and above ground, I should never think of taking the high road of rats and toads. Here, too, in a deep vault were buried the gigantic remains of the great King Arthur and his Queen Guinever, whose size it is to be hoped was suitable to that of her respected husband. There are some incredulous folk who dispute even the existence of this illustrious hero, but I should say

the evidence is all against them; and it is now pretty well established that he lived and died too, and was remarkable for keeping a good (round) table, and having the largest shin bone of any man in Britain.*

* The length of King Arthur's tibia, or shin bone, was celebrated in history.

Glastonbury and its Churches.

To an old formal stay-at-home, who, like myself, seldom or never sleeps out of his own bed, (perhaps not three times in as many years,) it occasions a curious surprise to awake in a strange one. It is always some time before I collect my senses sufficiently to be able to account for the unaccustomed objects arround me, and to bring my bewildered impressions to a clear perception of my situation.

At home, my eyes always open on the old-fashioned printed cotton bed furniture, with its alternate birds of paradise and baskets of roses, with every feather and flower of which I have become long familiar; and then there is the death of General Wolf, and my father's yeomanry sword, over the fire-place, which are as ancient friends; so that it quite throws me out to miss them in the morning.

Besides, there are actual comforts which I command at home, and which, of course, I am not unreasonable enough to expect abroad; for instance, there are two little worked pockets, at the head of my bedstead, in one of which I keep my watch, and in the other a box of hippo lozenges; and it has become so much a matter of habit with me, the moment I awake, to see to the time and take a confection, that I am sorry to say how much I feel the interruption to my usual custom, when I put back my hand, which I instinctively do, in a strange bed, and find no pockets there.

The hippo lozenge is to me what the awaking pinch of snuff is to other people; but I do nothing in "high dried," or any other description; for though goodness knows it would be something like vain dotage in me to dream so late in life of good looks, yet nature does enough to make us old men ugly, without our endeavouring to aggravate natural imperfections by art. If I ever had any youthful vanity, I hope I have seen winters enough to blight that

at least; still, as I am aware, there is nothing more displeasing than the slovenliness of senility, I do all I can in reason to make my grey hairs and wrinkles as little unprepossessing as possible. When I was a youth, I recollect people, especially the fair sex, when they saw a neatly dressed sex or septuagenarian, with his fresh complexion and his neatly frilled shirt, used to say "what a nice looking old man;" and since I have begun to descend the shady side of the hill myself, this observation has recurred to me, and I confess to the weakness of wishing, at least, so to keep my person and appearance, that people shall not say "what an old sloven." It is, therefore, that I eschew snuff, though for sociability I do not object, during conversation, to take a pinch out of my friend's box.

I was saying, however, that a strange bed was always a momentary waking embarrassment to an inveterate stay-at-home. My couch at the Pilgrim was even more than this to me, for it seems to have affected my slumbers, as I did little but dream all night; and owing, I suppose, to my evening's visit to the Abbey, monks and abbots were running through my head the whole time. One moment I was in the great Church, amid priests with embroidered copes, and albs and scapulars, listening, amid stained windows, and stately pillars, and jewelled altars, to the deep cadences of the *De Profundis*. Presently the music changed, and I saw a royal procession sweeping up the broad and spacious aisle, while I recognised the sage face of Edward the First, foremost amongst the illustrious worshippers; though, by a curious anomaly, his Queen, Eleanor, was leaning on James Henry Monk, Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol; while Victoria the First had taken the arm of the stately John of Taunton, the Abbot of the time. The scenes then shifted with the quick and vivid confusion of a kaliedescope; yet all seemed, strangely enough, to harmonize with sleeping sense and reason. I fancied I had taken my watch to be mended to Peter Lightfoot, the clock-making monk of Glastonbury; and the next moment I and my old friend, John Mills, were drinking wine with Geoffrey Fromund, in the Jubiler's

office, while Prior Robert, of Bath, was dressing a beefsteak for both.

How long I had been indulging in these hallucinations I cannot say; but when I awoke I well recollect missing the birds of paradise and baskets of roses, and particularly the jug of hot water, which my landlady places inside my door in the morning, to be ready for shaving as soon as I rise.

I can recommend the Pilgrim as a quiet and comfortable inn, to all the nobility, gentry, and clergy, who visit Glastonbury, in the fashionable season, for if nothing else, the people of the hostelry have the virtue of early risers; and I know nothing more uncomfortable than to descend in the morning to a room that is not made up, and to find the furniture as it was the night before, and ashes and cinders falling in "unsightly sort" through the grate.

Telling the fresh-coloured looking young woman, who was in the act of giving the last finishing touch to the window frame, to have a cut of ham and an egg ready for me by my return, I started for the Torr, to find an appetite for both. Soon after you begin to ascend the hill, you meet with a clear but scanty spring, which, after issuing from its subterraneous source, falls from a little freestone shoot by the road side. Nearly opposite are some dilapidated and deserted baths, or bathing houses, and the whole may be taken as a monument of a most singular affair, and a no less singular failure.

I don't profess to know the whole story perfectly, but as well as I can recollect, some hundred years ago, (in the middle of the 18th century,) there was a man named Matthew Chancellor, who lived somewhere in the neighbourhood, not many miles from Glastonbury, and who was afflicted with asthma and *phthisic*. One night, however, after a heavy fit of his malady, he dreamt of this same spring, and fancied an angel stood by him, and told him to drink a glass full of it every morning, for seven Sundays following, and that he should be cured of his affliction. Any one who had even the rheumatism, would be only too ready to comply with a dream which promised

such salutary consequences from so simple if not so salubrious a course; and worthy Matt. Chancellor, though he was as good a Protestant as ever fired a squib or burned a Guy Faux on the fifth of November, acted on the vision, and walked, with his tumbler in his hand, seven Sunday mornings following, from Wooton (Wooton I now recollect was where he lived) to the spring by Glastonbury, and *was cured;* at least, he made an affidavit to that effect, and, considering the honest man had nothing to gain by a fraud, I believe him; and not the less because modern hydropathists will tell you greater wonders than this have been achieved by a walk and a drink of spring water in the morning; air and exercise, and another element equally wholesome, all combining to work a cure, not to say a miracle.

However, there was a tremendous row about it at the time, Matthew Chancellor was denounced as a Jesuit in disguise, and the entire set down as a deep trick of whatever unfortunate Pope was on the throne of St. Peter at the period. There were others to defend the miracle, and the natural result of all this was, to fill Glastonbury with hundreds, nay thousands, of people, who came to try the virtue of the once unknown or neglected little spring by the foot of the Torr. Bathing houses, and I believe a pump room, arose to meet the demand; and there was for a moment a tide in the affairs of Glastonbury, which, if taken at the flow, would have led to fortune, and placed the little town on a par with Bath or Cheltenham. Every thing was in their favour—a beautiful neighbourhood, a splendid ruin (for that was before Mr. Down had begun to retail the Abbey by the ton), and a decent chalybeate spring, which, without at all making a miracle of the matter, might have been found serviceable to many; all in fact they wanted was a fashionable doctor—a Jephson, to prescribe a fasting draught of the spring, a mutton chop, and a walk to the four milestone on the Wells road —and Glastonbury would have grown a Leamington. But the foolish people of the place, by crying down the whole affair, made the water drinkers ashamed of themselves and

sceptical of the spring, and "the place of apples" in a few years sunk once more into its ancient modesty, and nothing is now left but a few ruined bath houses to tell of Chancellor's dream and his neighbours' blunder.*

As I approached the spring, thinking of old Chancellor, and almost expecting to see him in my mind's eye once more, with his mug in hand, trying to catch the scanty stream that trickled from the freestone shoot, I disturbed the morning gossip of two middle-aged women, who sat filling a couple of black bottles from the spout. They both rose up at the same time, the younger one saying as she did, and seemingly with reference to some foregoing observation, "Well, never mind; *it will be all the same in a hundred years.*"

Sir Joshua Reynolds called Doctor Johnson's heroines "philosophers in petticoats:" and here it would appear I had really lighted upon one. "*'Twill be all the same in a hundred years.*" It may be a homely and household phrase, but I never heard it before; and, to my mind, I could not have met with a more pungent and philosophic sentence amongst the Stoics of the Portico, the Peripatetics of the Lycæum, or the Platonists of the Academy. In it is contained solace for a thousand temporary griefs, losses, and annoyances that interrupt our eqanimity; but it has even a deeper and more solemn moral. You that are troubled about many things, think "It will be all the same in a hundred years." You that fever yourself in the acquisition of wealth, and even the higher rewards of worldly honours, think what little trace will be of them and of you in a hundred years. You that magnify momentary molehills into mountains, think what much greater things a hundred years rolling over this globe of our's will level and efface; aye, perhaps, almost leave the green mound above your grave by that time indistinct. You who are now raging about railroads, who toss on your beds thinking of

* The healing powers of the Hotwells are said to have been discovered by a dreamer (old Somebody, of Castle Street, who was cured by them) in the same way, (see Barrett or Seyer). The old fellow's malady I forget, but his cure was precisely similar.

this *line* and that, while mental anxiety is making many on your foreheads; it will be all the same in a hundred years, whether your favourite bill receive the sanction of the Board of Trade or not; by that time improved locomotives will run puffing and snorting, bearing a race yet unborn by our burial grounds, where, "after life's fitful fever," we shall have lain down to sleep—"perchance to dream—*aye, there's the rub;*"

Thinking of the woman's saying, I had almost insensibly climbed three parts of the Torr, when I paused and turned round to look down on the scene beneath me. "Let us get up early to the vineyards," says Solomon, in the exhilarating words of his sublime song, "let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appears, and the pomegranates bud forth." And what a glorious period of the day do we lose by not attending to this exhortation; there is not merely freshness in the morning, there is freshness in the very thought of the morning; and I never read the jubilant exclamation of David, "Awake psaltry and harp: I myself will awake right early," without thinking it as full of buoyant gladness as of godly rapture.

I cannot accuse myself with being a lie-a-bed, but I do not often go out before breakfast; and as I sit by the window, I see little more of the freshness of the morning than what finds its way through a serried row of ruddy chimney pots across some iron palings and a dispeptic flower bed. *Here*, however, I looked down on the little town bosomed amongst laden orchards, with a glimpse of the Severn in the distance, gleaming far away on the boundary of my broad landscape, while

"I knew by the smoke that so gracefully curled"

from almost every house in Glastonbury, that breakfast was being got ready in most of them; nor was my interest a whit less lively, when I recollected that my broiled ham was at that moment in preparation at the Pilgrim. At this same hour, and from this same spot, in olden time, pilgrims would have been seen entering the great abbey gate below, and monks returning from their morning walk;

while the poor were flocking for their dole, to the sharp tingle of the almonry bell.

Is it not Dr. Watts who says or sings—

> "Could I but stand where Moses stood,
> And view the landscape o'er?"

Never having been on the summit of Pisgah, I speak, of course, with all diffidence; but I cannot help questioning if the mighty lawgiver had a nobler prospect from his position, than I had from the top of Torr this Sunday morning. St. Bernard, after describing the beauties of surrounding nature, exclaims, "Good God, what a company of pleasures hast thou made for man!" and really the most profitable society one can have for half an hour on a Sunday morning, is the mute companionship of the thousand glorious and natural objects with which he is encircled at so sublime a point. It was a fine idea of the old monks to build a church on such a spot; and a very considerable honour was paid to Michael the Archangel, in selecting him as their patron: as Milton says—

> "A towered structure high,
> Where sceptered angels held their residence."

All that remains of this ancient fane is the steeple, which is no mean evidence of the style and ornament of the original edifice. The sole souvenir of St. Michael left is to be seen in a sculptured panel over the western portal, where the Archangel is represented as holding in his hand a pair of scales, and weighing the Bible against Satan, while Beelzebub is getting into the opposite balance, to try if possible to make it preponderate. The people of the neighbourhood, however, have a more homely, but not less characteristic interpretation of the relievo, which they declare represents somebody weighing butter, and the devil getting into the light scale—a tradition which, I fear, gives some grounds for believing that the people of Glastonbury were at one time addicted to short weights; as even Milton, who was a bold apocraphist, has no allusion to this incident in the life of the great archfiend.

Nothing less than broiled ham could have made my stay on the summit of the Torr as brief as it was; but as one cannot breakfast on the sublime and beautiful alone, I was induced to descend.

Between breakfast and church hour I paid a visit to the Almshouse founded by Abbot Bere, behind the Red Lion Inn, and which you enter from Magdalene Street through the ancient foot passage to the Abbey. It is for ten or a dozen old women: one of whom, Miss (Somebody) Fletcher, (as she afterwards gave me her name,) acted as my guide to the little chapel attached to the charity; and where, until within some few years, there used to be prayers, the stone altar, in spite of Sir Jenner Fust, still remaining. On the occasion of my visit, however, it was used as a storehouse for tubs of clean water—rather an inconsistent element in the foundation of an Abbot, whose arms were a cross between two *beer flagons:* strange supporters, you'll think; but for the vindication of his memory from every thing that could argue the converse of sobriety, it is but fair to say the device (which will be found on an escutcheon near the eastern window) had reference rather to his name than nature.

There is a tradition that Abbot Bere is buried in this little chapel, so I asked Mistress Fletcher if such were the case.

"The auld Abbot," said Miss F., shaking her head in ignorance, "I don't know; I never seed it."

"Did you never see his ghost?" said I.

"Lor a bless thee," was her reply, "no. Ghost! no; I never seed any thing worse than myself. Ghost! no; that I didn't;" and Miss F. laughed at the bare idea of Abbot Bere appearing above ground.

St. John the Baptist, the principal church of Glastonbury, is a light, commanding, and capacious, but not a highly ornamented, structure; though this latter observation can hardly be said to extend to the tower, which is very lofty, and, to a certain extent, elaborate. It consists of a nave with north and south aisles, with main and side chancels, and, I think, a small chapel or chauntry, with a

very fine south porch; but the interior, though capacious and of imposing outline, is naked and cold, the latter quality being considerably enhanced by the smallness of the congregation. The wood-work, of which there is a great deal in the shape of pews, &c., is cumbrous and decayed; and there is a row of select seats opposite the pulpit, and from which the green baize is peeled by reason of damp and neglect, that belong, I believe, to the Corporation. Indeed, I am convinced they do; for though I had not the honour of being elbowed by the Mayor, or packed between a pair of Glastonbury Aldermen, still I could see by the insignia—a couple of bronze maces surmounted by crowns, from which the red cotton velvet is coming away—that I was within the right worshipful precincts, for into these important pews I was shown. I like the idea of a Mayor and Corporation for Glastonbury, and am curious to know if the worshipful body have any abstract notions of turtle and venison; I looked round me to see what sort of living specimens they were, but as I could see only two young men and a thin old one, I concluded the Corporation did not go to church.

They have at St. John the Baptist a very stately sexton, who walks with measured step and tall white wand to the reading desk before the officiating clergyman, who on the present occasion was a Rev. Mr. Brown, who read badly, but preached well. My old friend, the Rev. Thomas Parfitt, with no outward sign of the clergyman about him but his bands, occupied the family pew for the greater part of the service: towards the Communion, however, he of the white wand brought his surplice, and the incumbent, with uncommon nonchalance, proceeded to robe himself before the face of the congregation in the front aisle. I don't think I ever heard a man of his age read as well as the Rev. Mr. Parfitt, with the exception, perhaps, of my ancient croney, James Taylor, of Clifton, who, ten years ago, was the most distinct, judicious, and impressive reader I can at this present writing recollect. The moment the Communion Service was over, however, Mr. Parfitt divested himself of his surplice with the same promptness as he

robed; so that if I said he *peeled* off, it would be only a term significant of the performance. These careless habits are contracted bit by bit; I should, therefore, recommend the venerable incumbent of St. John's to reform his mode of robing altogether, and retire to the vestry room, instead of continuing a practice which has at least the appearance of irreverence. There is no excuse at Glastonbury: if there was not a vestry, there might be some; but this is not the case, and I trust the custom will not be continued.

There was, as I have said, a very miserable congregation; and the few people looked so far away each from the other in that large Church, that I thought it a pity we did not retire to one of the side chancels, and have prayers there. It was a somewhat cold and desolate sight, I confess, to see so small a number out of so comparatively populous a place, assembled to worship God; and I might have been disposed to enquire the cause from the incumbent, but the moment prayers were over, he took up his hat and umbrella, and trudged out of the Church with such expedition that I could not overtake him. I did not know whether he was going to bury a corpse, christen a child, or eat his dinner, so I gave up the chase.

We had no singing: the organist *played* to "the praise and glory of God;" but there was no articulate thanksgiving—no giving out of hymn or psalm, for we might then have imagined the words; but there the Chief Musician sat, "like some lone bird without a mate," in his great gallery, and before an immense instrument, but without even a file of charity children to keep him company. He played admirably; but what had Heaven to do with a huge, tongueless, thoughtless compilation of Honduras mahogany and metallic pipes, without a human voice to aid it. It is only fair to say that there was a choir there until about twelve months ago, when, owing to some cause or other, they left.

There is no monument of much interest in the building. I am told that the church will, in a few years, fall in for a property to the amount of over £600 per annum; in which case I hope they will spend a good part of it in the repair

and decoration of the structure, which may thus become one of the fairest Churches in that part of the country.

The second or lower church is dedicated to St. Benedict. It is an old building, but beyond its antiquity has little interest. From the numbers I saw coming out, it must be crowded in the morning; it is clearly the popular place of worship. The little chance there was of making a decent Church of it seems lost by the late erection of a grotesque semicircular organ gallery under the tower. This modern innovation is decorated by old portraits of the twelve Apostles, painted on panels: they were until lately, I understand, in the upper Church; but the "lower people" coveting them, a vestry was called to authorize their translation, and the twelve are now associated with St. Benedict in holy brotherhood.

Reader, you have now all I know about Glastonbury; and if your own knowledge was not quite as extensive before the perusal of these papers, I pity your ignorance.

Bitton.

Thomas a Kempis says, "Qui multum peregrinantur raro sanctificantur;" and the quotation, I confess, seems to tell against your humble servant; for if those who "go much about get little good," my migratory habits are sufficient to place me in a point where I may be thought "almost past praying for." But with great respect for Thomas à Kempis, or whoever the man was that wrote under that name in the dark ages, and with great respect also for those who occasionally send me well-meaning but not wise missives, I think there is nothing to prevent the wanderer picking up good by the way side: nay more, I speak from my own experience when I say, there are moments in a Sabbath morning's walk when one cannot help receiving soft, if not sanctifying, impressions through every sense. Is it Wordsworth that says—

> "One impulse from the vernal wood
> May teach us more of man—
> Of moral evil and of good—
> Than all that sages can?"

And though, of course, I know the promptings of nature are no substitute for the teachings of sacred truth, I think they may mutually aid each other. Coleridge could see, in the gusty winds and falling leaves of an autumnal day, "the awful synthesis of life and death;" and on the same principle, I think we may feel, in the sunshine and flowers of a spring morning, the goodness, the greatness, and beneficence of God.

These, at least, were *my* impressions as I mounted John Bunyan to start for Bitton. I felt the cheerful influence of the "warm day" to the soles of my shoes, and grateful for everything—a horse to ride on, and health to enjoy such weather. I selected the Keynsham road for my

route; and, midway between Brislington and Bristol, met the Worshipful the Mayor thundering along in his close carriage, and "all the accessories," to say his prayers at St. Mark's. Seated on the outside of John Bunyan, with my face towards the free country, I did not envy him in the inside of a coach bound for Bristol. I could not help saying, or even singing, with the minstrel Blondel,—

"O Richard, O mon Roy!"

you may have the state, if I have but the fresh air. Not even for a seat in a civic coach would I now turn back with you to the crowded city from my rural ride.

It is very well for every one to be satisfied with their own station; and so happy did I feel—so perfectly contented with myself on that Sunday morning, lulled by the drowsy, but not disagreeable, purr-like creaking of my saddle as I rode along—that I don't think I could have added a single item to my wishes. When, after a long winter, and continuation of cold easterly cutting winds, the spring seems suddenly, on some fine Sunday morning, to leap down upon the world with a sommersault, and cry, as he scatters wild flowers and sunshine about, "I'm come at last," one's heart seems almost in a harlequin mood also. You welcome your shadow as it keeps you company along the road, as an old friend whom you hardly once got a glimpse of during the dull days; while the primroses, peeping in clusters from under the hedges, like little families of fair sisters, seem as if they had all come out during the night to wish you the joys of the season; and though it is only April,

"The glow of the sunshine, the balm of the air,
Steal to your heart and *make all summer there.*"

When I threw John's bridle to the boy at the White Hart, Bitton, though it was ten minutes past eleven by my watch, I thought I was still in time, as the good people of the hostelry had not left home.

"Hodge," said I, "have prayers commenced yet?"

"Yes, Sir, the bell be a done ringing."

"How is that, then, for your master and mistress, I see have not gone yet?"

Hodge shrugged his shoulders—a motion which said as plainly as possible, "Master and Missus are too anxious to serve their customers, to afford time to serve God."

I should hardly have known the vicarage as I passed it and the school-house, on my way to the Church up that pretty little lane. In my old friend Mr. Curtis's time it was a plain building; on the present vicar entering it as curate it was tastefully improved, but on his becoming incumbent, it grew with his growth into quite a gothic edifice, with a great array of oriel windows: and on this same progressive principle, I expect to see it a palace by the time he has expanded into a Bishop.

On entering the Church, seeing "FREE SEATS" painted on the wall to my left, I turned that way, and had just placed my hand on a pew door when the rest of the inscription met my eye—"FOR WOMEN!" at the same moment a grim old spinster—one of the village vestals of some three score years—in a rusty beaver bonnet, scowled at me, as much as to say, "You have no business here, you beant of our sex." A little disconcerted, I quickly withdrew my hand, and turning round I saw on the opposite side, "FREE SEATS FOR MEN;" and to one of these, as if to a city of refuge, I retreated, taking up my position by the side of one of the county constabulary. Mr. Vicar, is this your doing?—is it you that have been guilty of this almost eastern segregation of the sexes in the sacred edifice? I know it is sometimes done in conventicles; but this is the first time I have ever seen it followed in the Established Church, and I rise my voice against it, Mr. Vicar. Besides, to be just, the practice ought to be general. A little further up, amongst the seats that were not free, there was no such "invidious distinctions," and it is only with the humble that your arrangement, like the new Poor Law, interferes to separate man and wife. For my own part, I should have thought it far more edifying to be allowed to read out of the same book with some worthy old goody, and to hear her voice trembling through the

Litany, than to be placed as I was, like a culprit, by the side, and under the surveillance of a county constable. It would not, perhaps, be so wonderful if I, an old bachelor, were capable of such exclusive notions; but in the head of a house it is almost inexcusable.

Some of the malcontents throughout the kingdom have of late been getting up a great hubbub and opposition to chanting in the Church, on the grounds that the people cannot join in it. Had they been at Bitton with me on Sunday last, their objection would have been answered. Some portion of the services were chanted, and nothing could be more generally or agreeably done; and I am told it has been so for several years. Two or three rough young fellows in fustian jackets, who sat near me, got cleverly through it; even the old women were never at fault; and if there was any imperfection any where, it was with me and the county constable. The organist is the daughter of the village carpenter, self-taught, and, I believe unpaid. As the phrase goes, "this is just as it ought to be;" it is a simple and suitable offering of lay service; and, to my mind, the organ of the village Church is never so appropriately played as when the village parishioner presides at it.

If I were the Vicar, I'd preach a terrible sermon against irregularity (so far as time goes,) of attendance. The poorer portion seem to care little (as in most country Churches,) as to what hour they enter. Some two or three made their appearance as late as the Communion Service; and as if this were not sufficient disturbance, an old fellow, who, I suppose, calls himself a sexton, kept shuffling about inside the porch in a reversionary suit of the vicar's sables. I would advise this functionary to try and imitate the clerk, whose subdued, sober, quiet, and correct manner, is quite in keeping with his place. He reminds one of George Herbert's lines on *his* clerk—

> "Is humble minded and industrious handed;
> Does nothing of himself, but as commanded."

and such, in my opinion, a parish clerk (if we are to have one,) ought to be.

There were two, I might say three, interesting incidents in the service, on the day of my visit. One was the churching of women; a most solemn and beautiful service, and when introduced in its proper place (as in the present instance it was) imparts to, and I think derives from, the usual prayers an additional effect. The other incident was, the announcement by the Vicar of his son's being a candidate for deacon's orders at the next ordination; and solemnly calling on the congregation, according to the custom enjoined in such cases, if they knew any cause why he should not take upon him the holy office, in the name of God to declare it. Had this practice been always acted upon in the true spirit in which it had been intended, the Church and the Priesthood would at times have been saved some pain and scandal. The third circumstance consisted in the sermon, on the day of my visit, being an occasional one preparatory to confirmation. It was preached from Ecclesiastes c. v., v. 4.—"When thou vowest a vow unto God defer not to pay it, for He hath no pleasure in fools; pay that which thou hast vowed:" and was treated in a plain, sound, sensible manner. There was no eloquence, and evidently no intention to be eloquent; but he spoke to his congregation with a straightforward frankness, which showed that he was well aware of, and had no wish to conceal the fact, that this solemn rite was too lightly regarded, its obligations thought too little of, and its ceremony looked upon as furnishing more a day of show and amusement, than of solemn and grave import. How well, how distinctly, at the moment did I recall to mind my own confirmation. It was in Maryport Church, and I have now old Bishop Cornwall in my eye, as laying his hand on my head, (it was not grey or bald then) he pronounced his benediction in these beautiful words, "Defend, O Lord, this thy child," &c.

The Vicar of Bitton (who by the way, I must not forget to remark, read the lessons to my mind much too rapidly) is one of the most indefatigable men in the world. He is one of those men, who, if you placed him in the desert of Arabia, would I believe have half-a-dozen Churches up

about him in little more than that number of years. I'm afraid to say how many he has built in the parish of Bitton, which was once almost as bad as Arabia; but I think I am correct in stating that he found it with one, and that he has managed to add four or five others, and by the time he is gathered to his fathers as many more will I expect stand as monuments of his untiring, his unconquerable zeal and services to a large district, once so destitute of the proper means of public worship. Where he gets, or got, the money for them all, heaven knows, I don't; but I should say he must have been a most intrepid beggar and indefatigable man, to do what he has done; he restored the mother Church; he rebuilt Oldland; perched a pretty new chapel on Jeffery's Hill; and planted another amongst the coalpits of Kingswood; and too good a Churchman to confine his labours to his own parish, he is setting one or two on foot at Siston, and in all he is as cool-headed and as cool-handed as you can well imagine; he is too "old a stager," as somebody assured me, to be put out by a trifle; "high and dry," he rubs on enlarging the borders of the Church, while others are squabbling about her—erecting altars, while others are fighting about turning their faces towards to or from them. His energy would make him a capital Colonial Bishop, and if he could be tempted to take Hong Kong, the island, I'll be bound, would be full of Churches in less than no time. One only wishes he had a more grateful and better field for his exertions, for his parish is eaten up with Dissenters, whose ideas of religious duty are comprised in a few hours' cleanliness, on Sunday evenings, and "sitting under" a *preacher* for some sixty minutes. It must be, and I doubt not is, very disheartening to the Vicar to see so scanty an attendance of poor at the parish Church; for though there are not many in Bitton itself, the poor being principally in Oldland, more ought to come, and would if they were not drawn off by the meeting houses, with which on a Sunday afternoon the region round about is literally *vocal.*

The restoration, repairs, &c., at Bitton Church, have been effected with great good taste and architectural know-

ledge. There is an inscription which records that the interior was altered, &c., in 1822, when the present equalization of sittings was effected, there being before that date double pews, and twelve inches higher than the present. I believe these alterations and improvements were done principally by private subscriptions. I know the front of the gallery is covered with

"Many a crest that is famous in story"—

positively brilliant with emblazoned shields, which belong, as I have been informed, to those through whose donations the work was done; the "pride of heraldry" is put forth in all its pomp and power, or and azure, argent and sable, so that one would fancy a whole company of Knights Templars had come to Bitton, and hung up their bucklers in a row, lions rampant, and falcons volant, and stags gazant, and bloody hands and sharp daggers, dreadful to look upon, and numerous to describe. Whoever was the author of the idea it was a clever one: his family pride is a very good road to a man's pocket, and since the sale of indulgences was resorted to, to build St. Peter's, I have not heard of a more successful mode of raising funds to repair a Church. I do not know what amount, whether five or ten pounds, qualified a man to hang up his "quarterings;" but I should be very glad to get a niche in the gallery at a moderate price, provided the painter or the parish will supply me with a coat of arms, as the family of the "Church-goers," however ancient, have not yet attained to that dignity.

The nave is a Norman foundation; on the south and north the door cases of that date are still in good preservation, particularly the north, which is very beautiful, and highly enriched with lozenge mouldings. It has within the last year been copied in the restoration of the chancel arch, which was before Norman in form, but covered with plaister of Paris ball-room ornaments. The chancel itself is a good specimen of stone groining. The effect, however, is impaired by some square pews lined and *comforted.*

While peeping about the building after prayers, I saw a piece of paper pinned to the green baize of one of them, on which was written, "Mrs. Ellacombe's pew." Whether this is done by the Vicar to vindicate his own good taste, and imply that this lady is alone answerable for this cumbrous piece of wood work, I can't say, but I know this that the most suitable sitting for a clergyman's family, and the place and purpose, would be stalls. The other large pew is occupied by the tenants of the Rectory, for Bitton is an impropriate Rectory and a stall in the Cathedral of Sarum, the rich endowment (I am ashamed to have to record the fact) being leased out to Laymen. The east window, which is a handsome one, was glazed only within the last twenty years, being before that time blocked up, a gross act of barbarism, of which I could hardly have conceived any age capable. There is a north aisle or chantry, built about 1300, by Sir John Barr, and descending to the Newtons, has become their burying place. It is quite a gem in an architectural view, but being annexed to a private property, is kept locked up, and unless you have interest enough to get the key, you must be content with a peep through the key hole. The clerk, however, civilly opened it for me. It is principally early English: amongst the monumental memorials here found is one to Dame Newton, who had four sons and thirteen daughters! rather a large family of young ladies to bake for. Near this aisle, between it and the nave, is a little place, a kind of "old curiosity shop" for the Vicar's antiquarian collection, comprising an ancient stone coffin, let in like a cupboard to the wall, and such as was much used in the thirteenth century; there are also two priests of about the same date, and a cross-legged monument, ascertained to represent Sir Walter de Button, who died in 1227, and which is all that remains to us, I believe, of a family of great importance in the thirteenth century, three of them being Bishops, one of Exon, and two of Wells.

In the stone coffin, suspended by a nail, is a card, on which is written an intimation, or an invitation, whichever you please to call it, to the following effect: "If any

Camdenian, Antiquarian, or member of an Architectural Society should visit this Church, the Vicar begs he will do him the favour to call at the vicarage." Just the thing, thought I, for me; I'm an architectural amateur, and the Vicar must be at this moment sitting down with his family to his roast beef and horse raddish; and there is something so suggestive of comfort in yonder vicarage, the smoke "so gracefully curls" out of those Gothic chimneys, to say nothing of the subterraneous contingency of a cellar of old port, that I don't know when an invitation to a Sunday dinner, even though conveyed through the sombre medium of a stone coffin, ever came so welcome. I'll be with you in a moment, Mr. Vicar, said I, starting; but I had not got to the porch when a sudden thought struck me. No, no, it won't do, said I; even though the trap were baited with roast beef, I won't walk into it. The dearest lunch I ever eat I once had under nearly similar circumstances. I was down in Devonshire about fifteen years ago, and roving into a country Church, which was being very tastefully restored, I saw a notice posted up to nearly the same effect, only that the invitation included "all strangers:" the parsonage stood invitingly on a pleasant sunny slope close by, and I innocently enough walked up to it. The Rector received me very agreeably: we talked about the Church, and I complimented him on the good taste with which the work was carried on. Of course it was not difficult to persuade me to have lunch, and I will say without disparagement to other people's, that I never tasted a finer Glo'ster, or a better tap, but I paid two guineas for it; for just as I was about to leave, my hospitable friend the Rector produced a book, in which was a long list of those who had lunched with him, and left two guineas behind them for the restoration of the Church. I could not refuse, so I meekly signed my name, and put down two sovereigns and two shillings by way of embellishment. There may be a book, too, at Bitton, thought I—some ingenious, pretty, quiet, little web in the shape of a subscription list, to catch fly-about Camdenians and antiquarians, for the man must be no novice in the art of

raising money who could contrive to build so many Churches in so comparatively poor a parish. Besides, the chancel arch was restored only the other day, and all restorations are sure to leave a debt behind them; and on the present occasion I have barely enough about me to pay for John Bunyan's corn at the White Hart.

The present pulpit, which is a handsome one, was erected in 1838, and was the gift of a late parishioner.

The tower, which is a good specimen of very early Perpendicular work, merits the attention of the architectural amateur: there are heads of Edward III. and Queen Philippa in the corbels of the drip: the spire on the turret of the tower was restored in the Summer of '43, having been demolished *circa* 1650. On entering the Church I was struck with a very simple but curious mode of chiming the bells; one boy, without the slightest labour, chiming the whole set—the "ingenious device" is, I believe, the Vicar's. Here, too, close by the West entrance is a free-stone mural tablet, which I think afforded me as much pleasure as any thing I saw on the occasion of my visit.

It is erected by the Vicar (and does his head and heart great credit,) to the memory of an old and faithful servant —a practice which I am sorry is not more followed, for it tends to excite an honest ambition in the humble, when they find those they serve gratefully appreciating and publicly acknowledging their merits. People complain that servants are not what they were, and it is in my opinion in a great measure because masters are not what they were: that old family footing on which the *domestic* once stood in the household, and that family affection with which he or she was regarded, has grown out of fashion, and belongs, except in a few instances, to the *temporis acti.* The words of the inscription, as well as I can recollect, were these:—

This Tablet is erected to the memory of
John Mingo,
by the
Rev. H. T. Ellacombe;
with whom he lived as servant 14 years, at the Vicarage,
discharging his duty with
Exactness, honesty, and affection.

There is such another monument, and somewhat similar in purport, to an old servant, and erected by her mistress, in the little churchyard of Abbot's Leigh.

I should have said that the Church of Bitton is dedicated to St. Mary, and now consists of a nave or single aisle, and chancel.

Congresbury.

About seventeen years ago, I happened to be riding through Congresbury, on a fine and sunny afternoon, and as chance would have it, the court day there of the Bristol Corporation, that venerable body, as executors of the benevolent Carr, and original trustees of the City Charities, being the Lords of the Manor, and as such in the habit of holding a yearly Leet at the Ship and Castle, more, I apprehend, as a pleasent and immemorial form than from any actual purpose beyond the appointment of a bailiff. However, with this I have nothing to do; it was always an agreeable day for the Corporation, and a glorious one for Congresbury. The Church bells were ringing merrily, and every thing seemed in a holiday garb, as I entered the village; there was a crowd of expectant country people on the bridge, and more in front of the little inn, while the steps of the old cross to its fifth tier were piled with children.

"What's the matter?" said I, pulling up and addressing myself to the first man I met.

"Why 'tis coort day, to be sure," replied the man, seemingly surprised that there was any one living on this habitable globe unconscious of a fact which made such a stir in the village and parish of Congresbury.

"Court day," I repeated. "What court?"

"The leet coort, of course—the alderman are coming," and he grew more and more impatient at my ignorance.

"Here they be—here they be!" shouted the crowd, on the bridge at the same moment; and down the Bristol road, came cracking along three carriages containing the said aldermen, seemingly in no wise ignorant themselves of the sensation they were causing. The natives raised a shout, for, I believe, to their imaginations a Bristol Alderman was the next greatest man to Napoleon Buonaparte, and not to be behind them in homage I raised

my hat as their Worships passed. In the first carriage was Alderman Daniel and John Haythorne, and in the others old Brooke, and Tom Camplin, Gabriel Goldney, and my old schoolfellow the Chamberlain, and I think John Savage, while resplendent from the box of the first vehicle shone the brilliant red vest of Morgan, the sheriff's officer. Old Sam Baker, of Aldwick, who generally dined with them on these occasions, awaited their advent at the door of the Ship and Castle, and they each and all shook him heartily by the hand; the Chamberlain, the moment he had completed his salutation, turning round and exclaiming with earnestness, "Morgan, mind the fish basket!" and a turbot that would have graced the table of Vitellius descended solemnly and slowly from the dickey of the first carriage.

I need not tell you that all this was before the municipal revolution, or reformation, or whatever they call it—a jolly and glorious time, at least for aldermen. There are others too, who, though they were not a whit the better for all this eating and drinking, and who knew nothing but by report of those splendid repasts, yet deplore the period as bitterly as though they had fared sumptuously every day out of the city chest. I for instance was never an ounce the fatter for all their feasting, beyond the sniff of roast and stew that reached my nostrils as I passed, in common with the crowd, by the Mansion House in Queen Square; yet I could have sat me down on the steps of the Council House and wept when I found the fiat had gone forth for their dissolution—that "Ichabod" was about to be inscribed above the civic chamber—that there was to be no more calipash and calipee, no more larded capons and hunted haunches, no Red Breasts carrying notes of invitation, and touching a crown for their conveyance; that, in fact, the glory and prestige of five hundred years was to be given to the winds. Still, as I said before, what did I suffer by the catastrophe, that I should feel it so sorely—"what was I to Hecuba, or Hecuba to me, that I should weep for her?"—nothing, *absolutely* nothing, and yet I feel it, as many hundreds more did, as if it were my own case:

such is the force of local affections which identify themselves with, and participate in, every circumstance that seems to adorn or dignify the place of one's birth, or the society of which one forms a part. Besides, there is albeit all the adages that go to impress you with the idea that the nature of man is fond of novelty, a tendency in the human heart—a little trace of good retained or saved from the ruin of our common fall—to regard what is ancient with reverence and respect; and to grieve when new systems arise to supplant the institutions of centuries. Strange as it may appear, there was to me and many others, lovers of old things and old times, something pleasant in the idea that though we ourselves were no participators in these revels, there were a body of fortunate and favoured individuals amongst us who kept up, in their own persons, the principle of hospitality, and ate, and drank, and were merry for the rest of their fellow-citizens, and for the good and the glory of the place over which they presided. For my part I never passed the corner of Queen Square, and heard the sound of revelry from the long room above, that I did not experience a secret enjoyment in the consciousness that there were at least some couple dozen men in the city who might be said to enjoy themselves at that moment: and it was something when you saw an alderman being helped or hobble into his carriage, to be able to say to a stranger "That's the way our mighty men live."

There was something magnificent, too, in the pompous and ponderous gravity in which these potent seignors moved, compared with the meagre expedition of the present age.

A civic deputation then took three days, at the lowest estimate, to achieve the journey between Bristol and London; they made the distance by easy stages; and merciful men, they were merciful to themselves and their posters. They travelled with their cook and their fish-basket —a wise provision, and worthy the age and the men; for what would they have done, as it has been piteously expressed, had they found themselves in a small country town with a large turbot, and no one to dress it. If they did not travel like imperial potentates, they did, at least,

like merchant princes; they lunched in Bath on a refection not hastily prepared, but prudently pre-advised by post; they dined at Marlborough, for the same reason that Apicius resided at Minturnæ—to enjoy the native fish; and glorious was the dish of indigenous eels, "spatchcocked" to perfection, that refreshed the wayfarers. For an alderman to travel on a full stomach, and disturb a serious process which takes place after dinner, would only be less absurd than for him to begin his journey on an empty one, so they slept at Marlborough. A second sun was consumed in reaching and refreshing at Spacham Lands; and late in the afternoon of the third day the civic pilgrims got a distant glimpse of the cross and dome of St. Paul's; and their travel ended, reached their journey's end in time to enjoy three courses, and insert their names in the next morning's *Post*.

Such deputations were always successful: the minister of the day was overawed in the presence of the portly provincials, and denied them nothing. And if Bristol be now but indifferently regarded at head-quarters, it is not to be wondered at, when we send up four men in Mackintoshes, and in as many hours, who merely pause for the given minutes and a mouthful at Swindon, where they are driven to the individual enterprise of tossing up for a pork pie, or looking inquiringly at each other as much as to say, "who pays for the sandwich?"

If no body else do, the people of Congresbury, I am quite sure, regret the change; and it would take a great deal of reasoning to convince them *they* have profited by corporate reform. It is true they may have been nothing the better or fatter for the annual dinner at the Ship and Castle, only so far as they were interested with the rest of the public in the saving effected in cheap food, when the aldermen, according to the old story, patriotically resolved to live entirely on turtle, so as to throw more bread into the market. But it was something to have their village annually honoured by a civic visit. It is true the Corporation of Bristol were more fortunate than those of many other places: the council-chamber never passed wholly into the possession of the Liberals, and old people were

saved the mortification experienced elsewhere, of seeing what was time-honoured treated with indignity. The first act of the Reformed Corporation of Leicester, for instance, was one of proscription, which, had it occured here, would have well nigh been the death of some dozen devout worshippers of antiquity whom I might mention; it, however, elicited an act of individual spirit which is well worth recording. It appears the worshipful body referred to no sooner found themselves in a liberal majority than they advertised the mace for sale. Truculent purists: the "village Hampdens" magnanimously declared such a bauble was not necessary to the public welfare; and, actuated by the spirit of so many Cromwells, heroically ordered the auctioneer to take it away. In the same city, however, there dwelt an old lady, who heard with horror that the ancient badge, which she had learned to regard with veneration, as one of the Penates of the place, was in imminent peril of being manufactured into silver spoons, and she resolved to avert, if possible, and as far as in her lay, the public disgrace. She attended the mart with a mighty purse, and, with a virtuous indignation, bid far and away beyond all presumptuous and would-be buyers.

The world wondered what the old lady could want of the mace, as, committing it to the care of a stout servant, she accompanied it home herself, so as not to lose sight for a moment of a treasure so fortunately saved. The next Sunday, however, solved the mystery; for all Leicester saw the old lady stalk to church with stately step, preceded by her servant with the mace presented before him. He strode up the aisle in front of his mistress, and wheeling round by her pew saw her seated, then formally grounded his mace and sat down at the door. The same procession was also enacted after service; and the old lady was a walking weekly witness against the Liberal Corporation of Leicester; for wet or dry, whether she went on foot or rode in a sedan, the mace was carried before her. In the revolution of things, however, the Corporation of Leicester returned once more into the hands of the Conservatives, who, anxious to remove the stain from the city, applied to

the old lady to repurchase the mace; but she would not consent: it had one escape already from being converted into silver tea-pots, and she felt convinced it was safer in her hands than theirs; but she would lend it to them on state occasions. And she has been as good as her word, invariably, however, insisting on its being brought back before night, for which she has the Mayor's word of honour, and the common bond of the body corporate. Here, however, the maces remained, but the charities passed into different hands; and all that is left of the magnates that administered them, is the memory of their good works and their manorial dinners. They say, however, it is all for the better; and, being no politician, I never attempted to prove the converse, especially as silent concurrence, to use the words of Stella, (see her character, by Swift,) "prevents noise and saves time;" nevertheless, I have my own opinions, but won't trouble the reader with them.

On the occasion of my present visit it was quite a different day to that which smiled upon the court leet of the Bristol Corporation, seventeen years ago. Then sunlight and festivity lit up the scene, now it was cold and cheerless, the close of autumn and the approach of winter were everywhere observable; there was a constant dropping of damp decayed leaves from the hedges, in many places red berries stood disconsolate and naked on the mountain ash, and the red haws, surviving their foliage, looked lonely enough on their native thorn, while the orchards had little left but their late winter apples, which were nothing too tempting as they hung thinly and coldly from bare branches. It is true the alder tree, with its glossy black berries, was green enough, and the Michaelmas daisy, like a posthumous child, opened its little bright eyes on a dead or dying autumn; the hollyhock, too, (for vulgar natures are always least sensitive of the influence which others feel,) had outlived the gentler tenants of the garden. Such particular instances of vitality, however, were but poor recompense for the general decline, and if the willow which dipt its long green locks in the little river Yeo, in

the rear of the village inn, still preserved its verdure, it was only amid surrounding signs of mortality, for the surface of the stream was crowded with dead forest leaves, which swept hurriedly by, or tangled themselves in the dripping and dishevelled foliage of the weeping tree.

"Heaven bless you, Mistress Mees," said I, as I looked at the bright new dial of the Church clock; "Heaven bless you, and may your present long sound your praises to the world." Mrs. Mees, I should tell you, is an excellent elderly lady, living in Congresbury, and who, though residing in a village, has, not like many whose abode is in broad cities, a "nature as narrow as the neck of a vinegar cruet;" she wished to do something for her native parish, and particularly for her parish Church, and the substantial gift of a good clock occurred to her practical mind as the most useful and best. Congresbury had been from immemorial time without a public oracle, the rude chronometer of the village, for ages, being the tall shaft of the cross, or rather the shadow which it cast on the triple highway where it stood;* a capital clock, however, now tells to the village in particular, and to the surrounding population, as far as its voice will reach, the course of time in hours, and, I think, in quarters. In these days of spiritual speculation I am pleased, I confess, with this practical and somewhat homely idea of a clock for a present; I don't underrate missions, far from it, nor so long as public sympathy takes such ardent and remote flights to Fejees, Chinese, and Jews, is there any danger of these being neglected. Still amid such evangelizing ardour it is peculiar, if not pleasing, to see an elderly lady so far condescending to this sublunar world as to entertain the idea of anything so mechanical as a Church clock. And yet that thing of wheels and cranks may not be without its solemn uses in other respects than as a mere

* Yatton has a clock, and on its dial is the following inscription, glistening in new gold, which points rather significantly to the two principal officials of the parish, as if they alone stood in need of the admonition it conveys: "*Vigilate et orate; Tempus fugit:* Churchwardens." (!)

domestic convenience and economist of time. It has been pronounced "greatly wise,"

> "To talk with our past hours,
> And ask them what account they bore to heaven!"

And I have often thought that no sublimer discourse was ever delivered from *stone pulpit*, than that which the village clock tolls forth from its high tower to minds prepared to receive it. What an impressive position, too, from which to preach on the "passage of life;" its iron voice calls to the quick over the resting-places of the dead, and it is as if old Time himself preached to us from amid the surrounding trophies and memorials of his own triumphs, as evidenced in many a green mound beneath.

If you want to see an old country Church, and churchyard, and parsonage, all harmonizing, and all happily in keeping and character, visit Congresbury; but let it not be on a dark raw morning, (though even this will not deprive it of all its impressive repose,) but on a summer's afternoon, and then say if you do not concur with me in thinking it such a peculiarly pleasing and ecclesiastical picture as you have seldom seen. Fancy a fine old Church, with an ancient yew tree, (the sombre patriarch of the parish,) overshadowing its chancel with outstretched arms, the country churchyard with its cross, and the picturesque Gothic parsonage, with its old projecting porch and rose-covered front, and all within the same enclosure. If there is one spot more than another, in which you might be induced to say, if

> "There's peace to be found in this world,
> The heart that is humble might seek for it here,"

it is before that same old Gothic parsonage, when summer has draped its low casements, and decked their stone mullions with the clustering rose and clematis; and the pretty flower beds in front, joining the green graves of the villagers, seem as though they were mercifully intended rather to deck the resting places of the dead, than for the

delight of the living. I should not soon grow tired of viewing or describing this parsonage, it is just such an one as George Herbert's or Izaak Walton's heart would have warmed to behold, with its porch hallowed by a hundred hospitable memories, furnished with its sedilia, and its wide arched entrance seeming always and all so invitingly open. It would appear as though it were meant to be characteristic of the spirit of our forefathers, as if those who built it (peace to their ashes) never intended that the faint and hungry wayfarer should pass by it unrefreshed; the old-fashioned architect did not even leave the parson a door to slam in the face of the poor, were he so disposed.

"How partial," said I to a rustic who was standing on the gravel walk, admiring a flock of pea fowl, "your clergyman must be to such a pretty parsonage."

"If he be," said my friend, "'tis curious he is so often away from it."

There is often more "craft in a clouted shoe" than people imagine, and I am free to confess, in many of my rural rambles, I am compelled to have recourse to such casual information as I can *talk out* of some simple parishioner; though I am always ready to make allowances for personal piques or partialities. I questioned my informant what he meant by the clergyman being from home, or where he went to.

"To foreign parts," was the reply; and I gradually gathered from my neighbour that these absences were somewhat more than mere summer excursions, and that the Incumbent was frequently away from his parish and parsonage for months together, I believe on the Continent, when the care of two parishes, Congresbury and Wick St. Lawrence, are left to a single curate, and such stray help as might be begged or borrowed.

Now I know that even the picturesque old parsonage, with its grey Gothic porch, its climing roses, its peaceful air, and its pretty little flower plots, may at times become irksome to those who have no taste for rural life, and that even the repose of a pretty village, its old Church and yew

tree, may grow tiresome objects to the eye that is used to travel; still, if a clergyman will go abroad for health or variety, he ought to leave somebody behind him to occupy his place, and not commit to one curate, for months together, the onerous duties of two country parishes. If parochial duties merely consisted (but they do not) in the performance of Sunday services, an active man, with the aid of a couple of fleet horses, might manage to gallop between two Churches, so as to leave neither unserved; but a clergyman with his bands on, riding like a postman along the highway, and disturbing the Sabbath repose by the sound of his horse's hoofs, may be a *current*, but is not a very correct, commentary on the fourth commandment. Besides, there ought to exist a kind of family and affectionate feeling between a clergyman and his parishioners, which ought to have at all times a homeward attraction to the former, and make absence ungrateful to both. The parishioners ought to be to the clergyman as his family, and the pastor to the parishioners as their parental head; the parsonage house ought to be the centre and focus of affection to all the simple and honest hearted dwellers around, so that in the cottage there might be felt a fond and familiar interest in all the innocent every-day affairs of the rectory, no less than the simple concerns of the cottage are a source of friendly solicitude at the rectory. If the country clergyman attracted the interest and attachment which I think properly belongs to his place and profession, and which but for the unfortunate schismatic temper of the age I think he would do, he ought never to leave his parish, even for a short time, without the blessings of his people, or return to it without their joyful welcomes.

I had been walking about the churchyard some time, when the bells began to chime, the old Redcliff chime, a faint but a fond imitation of a sweet cadence so familiar to me from childhood. Soon after the Rector, in his gown and hood, walked from the parsonage porch to that of the Church, a circumstance so simple in itself, which was only wanted to fill up the sweetly pastoral and parochial character of the picture.

The Church is plain, but of "most fair" proportions; it has a centre, (lit from a clerestory,) north and south aisles, and a main and side chancels, or chauntries: it is of the perpendicular Gothic, though there is evidence of its being repaired or restored at different periods; the piers which separate the aisles are on the north clustered columns, and on the south cylindrical; and the tracery of the windows also differ—the north side seeming on the whole of a more recent date. The wall of the clerestory is elaborately panelled, the mouldings of which seem to have been recently picked out with black paint, which has a very staring and prominent appearance. There is a good rood screen, and a reredos (commonly called altar screen); the latter has, I believe, been lately erected, and this as well as a beautiful altar cloth, was, with very creditable readiness, contributed by the rate payers.

The Church filled well, and I have never seen the service better performed. The rector (the Rev.—Haythorne) is an admirable and impressive reader; and there is, for a country Church, a very fair and effective choir. I mention this with pleasure, the more so as I have been induced to allude to the circumstance of absence with some reluctance: but as I have taken upon myself (impudently enough, as some assert) the place of ecclesiastical censor, it shows an insipid timidity to shrink from turning both sides of the picture to the public. I merely tell my story as I glean it by gossiping in the churchyard and on the highway, and have no personal motives in the matter.

The sermon was preached from the first nine verses of the 107th Psalm, and it was with some apprehension I began to question whether the discourse would bear any proportion to the length of the text. There was no cause for complaint on this head, however, nor indeed on any other, so far as the sermon was concerned. It opened with a beautiful and really eloquent allusion to the little which men avail themselves of their Heavenly privilege and opportunity of praise-giving, and then suggested an idea which is always one of grandeur, namely, the amazement of the angels who ever worshipped round the throne,

when they looked down on this revolving world of ours, the object of so much mercy, and yet from which so little praise ascended: the discourse was not equally maintained throughout, and the preacher's manner is somwhat cold and austere; but upon the whole it seemed to attract much attention.

I suppose there is a master to look after the boys, but not one of them at the lower part of the Church seemed to have a prayer book, and all lounged during the service most lazily and listlessly, with their eyes all vacant and their mouths wide open over the pews, with the exception of some still more juvenile who occupied a seat behind me, and who were of a more active turn, for they did nothing, in spite of a great many black looks from me, but fight and draw figures on the wall during the Litany. If there is nobody else to do it, I should be very glad to lend my gratuitous services to thrash them into propriety, and find myself in birches into the bargain.

Blagdon.

As I rode through Bedminster on the morning of my visit to Blagdon, a kind of Cobourg (I think you call it,) or market-cart, in which were a number of young men with black coats and white neckcloths, passed me; and soon after pulled up, and deposited one of its semi-clerical-looking company in front of something like a conventicle. The conveyance then proceeded on its way; and as I was curious enough to wish to know what this meant, I pushed John to "a prettier pace," and was enabled to keep up with it, until another black coat and white neckcloth popped out near Bishport; the Cobourg still continuing its course, and, doubtless, dispensing more young ministers, like a shower of manna, by the way. This, I afterwards learned, was a conveyance belonging to the Baptist College in Stoke's Croft, from which it starts every Sunday morning for the country, with a cargo of young students, who are dropt in the manner referred to along a given line, and amongst congregations who are waiting their advent. The Cobourg having conveyed the "last man" to the remotest chapel, waits until he has preached; and then, retracing its road, picks up the others in its progress, after they have got rid of their pent-up orations also. This is, doubtless, a good plan for young men to try their nascent theology and rhetoric on rural audiences; but, without wishing to say any thing disrespectful of the College or the students, (who are also named on such occasions "supplies,") the return career of the Cobourg resembled, in my imagination, calling for empty cans, inasmuch as each young man had by that time discharged himself of his discourse.

Blagdon is a long ride from Bristol, but a beautiful one; and I should like to have had a fellow-traveller through Rickford Combe and the Vale of Burrington, for

it is barren work riding amid the most picturesque scenery, and having nobody by your side to whom to say, "How beautiful!" My only companionship was the drowsy creaking of John's saddle and the singing of the birds. In the olden time, before the age of rails, I must have met, by Redhill and along the road, some Exeter coach; but as I passed the inn at the former place, which was once so famous for egg-flip, as the passenger on the *Estafette* was possibly well aware, I could not help comforting myself with the reflection, that there was something more lone than a solitary horseman—and that was, a way-side inn after a railroad had run away with its customers.

On arriving at the toll-bar at Blagdon, I pulled out my penny to pay for John. "It is double 'pike to-day, Sir," said the man in charge.

"Indeed," said I, "are not people allowed to pass free to Church?"

"Yes, Sir, but they be the parishioners."

"And how do you know, friend, that my residence is not within your boundaries?" I enquired.

The man looked at me archly, as he answered, "You could not be in the parish and people not know it. If you staid at home, you'd have nothing to pay."

"There, my worthy neighbour," said I, giving him the two-pence; "it is well if a double 'pike be the only penalty I shall have to pay for my Sunday vagrancy."

Whether it was that they were looking out for "a supply" or not, I can't say; but most of the congregation of the sole Dissenting chapel at Blagdon were standing in front of the building, and seemingly on the watch for somebody. For a moment I was apprehensive that they might have taken me and John for what we were not, as they made rather a critical survey of both; so to prevent mistakes, I took refuge in the Seymour Arms, and having housed the quadruped, I proceeded along a very prettily kept pathway through the fields to the Church, from and about which there is one of the noblest and most extensive prospects I think I have ever seen, at least in Somerset-

shire. From the churchyard, as if from a platform, you look down on a vast vale, and right across to Redhill and Wrington, catching in your cursory glance the gabled roof of many an English residence, rising amidst its "tall ancestral trees." Hard by was a little clear spring, in which, as the day was sultry, I bathed my hands, and fancied that many a mendicant friar had done the same in the same spot before me.

Blagdon is not much of a country Church; there is, I fancy, an affectation of city refinement about it: the tower is old and good, as in fact nearly all the towers in Somersetshire are; but the nave, which appears comparatively new, is gaunt and incongruous, like something that attempted to be Early English, *and was nothing*. It has a great organ and a grand beadle, the latter with a capacity of red cape quite surprising for the country; he sat in a kind of prompter's box, which equally commanded the porch and the pulpit, and shewed me politely into a pew, the third from the reading desk, and the second in size.

I thought I knew the clergyman who was reading prayers as I entered, and on rubbing my glasses had no difficulty in identifying my young friend the Rev. Robert Taylor, formerly curate of St. James's, in the City of Bristol, and now Clerical Secretary of the Society for the Conversion of the Jews. "Ha," thought I, "I'm in for another twelve pence for Sir Moses Montefiore and the Baron Rothschild, those obdurate Hebrews, who have already cost me twenty shillings, and to no purpose." But I was mistaken: the Clerical Secretary of the Jews had for the day given himself up to the Gentiles; he was, in fact, as I afterwards learned, preaching for the incumbent, the Rev. Mr. Wheeler, who has been, I am sorry to hear, for some time in delicate health, and is consequently compelled to get foreign aid nearly every Sunday, so that the congregation have from this circumstance sufficient variety. To "itching ears" this may seem a boon; but I question if in the long run it is an advantage to a simple and rural population to see new faces, and hear new styles every Sunday. In the present case, however, I cannot

see how it is to be obviated, unless perhaps by the employment of a curate, which the incumbent, if he were not in the neighbourhood of a large city, must inevitably have recourse to.

It is surprising what a number of unattached clergymen there are available for such sudden and casual calls in Bristol; and I am assured that many of them make considerably more by this "desultory work," than they could by curacies. I was told by a gentleman who does not now reside in Bristol, that without seeking, or, as he expressed it, putting himself in the way of such work, he generally made between £80 and £100 a year by "accidental Sunday services." And I think it is quite fair that without making a market of it, clergymen should be paid by their brethren, who have been more fortunate than themselves, for their work, as we know there are many parish ministers, especially in the country, who are particularly fond of making use of their unattached friends, when they can have them for nothing. A clergyman who had no living or curacy, though a considerable independence of his own, assured me that he was obliged to change his residence on this account, and on going to a new quarter, he intimated he should be happy to do duty for any of his reverend brethren who might require his aid, at "three guineas a day, and a pair of posters;" and the consequence was they did not trouble him. There is one incumbent of the diocese of Gloucester and Bristol, who is humourously likened amongst his reverend acquaintances to "England," in Lord Nelson's celebrated signal, inasmuch as he "expects every man to do *his* duty," and that for no weightier consideration than boiled beef and parsnips between services at the parsonage. However, there are faults on the other side of the question, to one or two of which I shall refer. The unattached Bristol clergyman to whom I at first referred, told me that he was one day waited on by three or four brother *sans*-cures, who informed him that they had determined to charge for one duty for the future one guinea, and for the whole Sunday two, and wished him to consent and

concur in the agreement, which he declined to do, and in my opinion very properly, for it looked like striking for wages, and some graceless people might compare it to a clerical combination. It may be very fair for a young and unbeneficed clergyman to have two guineas out of a well-fledged Rector; but suppose a Curate, or a man with a large family and a small living, is obliged to be absent from sickness, or on unavoidable business, it would be very harsh to exact such terms from him; and to the credit of the clergymen in question, instead of charging in these cases, they have always, with the feelings of gentlemen and Christians, given their services gratuitously; but still I never liked trade combinations, and I must be permitted to have a prejudice against clerical ones, as somewhat unworthy of the cloth.

The interior of Blagdon Church seems spacious to the eye, but it has nothing whatever to boast of, being full of great pews, which it requires a person of considerable stature to peep over; and not content with this wooden defence from observation, the clergyman and some others have further enclosed themselves with thick curtains.

The only thing worth noticing in the building is a mural monument, on the north of the chancel, of comparatively modern date, with the following inscription, which I should premise was written by Dr. Langhorn, formerly Rector of the parish, to the memory of Mistress Ann, his wife:—

> "With Sappho's taste, with Arria's tender heart,
> Lucretia's honour, and Cecilia's art.
> That such a woman died, surprise can't give;
> 'Tis only strange that such an one should live."

And 'tis equally strange that any man, who really *felt* for the loss of a loving wife, could sit down and write such a wretched and insipid conceit for her epitaph. Reduced to plain English, I suppose this means, that she read Spenser and Shakspere; that she was attentive to her husband; that she did not involve him in an action for *crim. con.*, and played upon the piano forte. The com-

parison to Arria I cannot well understand: the only lady of that name, with whom I am acquainted, is one whom Pliny informs us was the wife of the Senator Pœtus Cecinna, and who, when her husband (who was accused of conspiring against Claudius,) was being carried to Rome by sea, accompanied him, and in the boat stabbed herself, and presented the sword to her husband, who followed her example. I hope Mistress Anne never attempted to induce the Doctor of Divinity to commit such an act of self-immolation; and if not, I fear her inconsolable husband is out of court.

Blagdon is the first country Church in which I have been treated to a voluntary during service; and to my mind, I think we might have very well dispensed with it, or substituted a psalm instead. During prayers they unhitch the clapper from the bell, and the consequence is, that instead of hearing a tolerable sound, the abortive attempts of the clock to tell the hours to the parish, more resembled the inharmonious clatter of a pump-handle than any thing else I can compare it to.

The whole of the duty, with the exception of some part of the Communion Service, which was taken by the Reverend the Incumbent, was performed by the Clerical Secretary of the Jews, who preached an admirable *extempore* sermon, from the fourteenth chapter of St. John, sixteenth verse. There is a terseness at times amounting to singularity in his style, but no unreasonable or grotesque oddity. I was more than once struck with the aptness with which he introduced striking passages from the Scriptures, and from old Divines. One from the latter, which I had never heard before, quite fastened itself on my memory; it was, "Our afflictions are like a shepherd's dog, sent not to worry us, but to bring us back to the true Shepherd." When I entered the Church, immediately on seeing Mr. Taylor in the reading-desk, I pushed a shilling into the corner of my pocket, towards purchasing the fee simple of Mount Zion for Bishop Alexander; and three or four times during the sermon I had this same shilling between my finger and thumb, under the impres-

sion that the next sentence would be an appeal to our liberality. The discourse, however, passed over without any pecuniary reference whatever; but as I allocated the twelve pence in my mind's eye to the purpose, I think it is not fair to appropriate it to any thing else, so that if the collector of the society will call on the editor of the *Bristol Times*, I have authorized that gentleman to pay over the same to any person properly and duly authorized to receive it. Otherwise I shall pay it into Miles's bank, to the credit of the Bishop of Jerusalem.

The whole duty, with the exception of a part of the Communion Service, which was taken by the Rev. the Incumbent, was performed by Mr. Taylor. I can, therefore, only speak to Mr. Wheeler's reading, which was certainly more singular than correct. Indeed, I seldom have heard such a reader; some passages he delivered very low, and others swelled into great loudness, while the sense and signification of the text had no reference whatever to these sudden and abrupt changes of voice. If this arose from any natural defect I should abstain from referring to it; but it is evidently a bad style acquired and contracted.

As a parish minister, however, he is an active and pains-taking man, and the cleanliness and care observable in everything connected with the Church, and celebration of divine service, is very creditable to him.

Near the Church is a neat school, which is retained in respectable efficiency by the combined liberality and attention of the Incumbent and the Misses Baker, the daughters of my esteemed old friend Samuel Baker, of Alwick Court, and who I am happy to see inherit from their worthy father a love and devotion for the Church. As this comes from an old man, they will not I hope look upon it as a compliment.

Butcombe.

THIS same afternoon I walked across to Butcombe, which is about a mile and a half from Blagdon. It is a little out-of-the way place on the side of a lonely valley. It is a small parish, and its few hundred of inhabitants are for the most part poor and uncultivated.

I believe that I have never before packed two Churches into one paper; but as there was little to be said about Blagdon, and less about Butcombe, I thought perhaps the reader would take two short notices for one long one.

Though a portion of the road lay across some elevated meadows, commanding beautiful views, the greater part was lonely and desolate. Within about a quarter of a mile of Butcombe, I found a little fellow, some five years old, grovelling in the dust by the ditch-side and crying. I inquired what the matter was, and after I had repeated the question in a great many different shapes, he at length gave me to understand that he had "a pain *there*" (placing his hand on his stomach). I felt I could not act the Levite, and pass by on the other side, while the child was ill; so learning from him that his mother lived in the village, I was preparing to carry him home on my back, when a farmer, who understood the habits of the natives better than I did, came up and relieved me of all responsibility by assuring me it was a fit of sulks—a discovery at which I was not sorry, as while I considered it my duty to carry the boy in case he was sick, I greatly doubted my ability to do so.

On a sign-board over the first house in the village (if a few straggling huts can be called by that title), is the name of "Nimshi Clarke," the "son of Jehu," and here I meant to have inquired the hour of service; but as the place was shut up, I was compelled to seek my information

at the cottage opposite. This circumstance I relate, because it was attended with an awkward incident; for on pushing open the door, which was only partially closed, I disturbed a young woman in the act of robing for Church. She seemed discomposed, but I was downright frightened: to have paused to apologise would have made the matter worse; so I had nothing for it but to retire precipitately, declaring to myself that I should never again be guilty of the indiscretion of pushing in a half-closed door, lest I might tumble on some rustic half-finished toilet.

The most favourable view you can take of Butcombe is from the churchyard, from which you look down on a wide prospect; though the situation must be somewhat cold in winter. It is an old but rather interesting little Church, with a small nave and chancel, and a south porch; the tower and a very tiny chapel is on the same side. There is also a portion of the shaft of an ancient cross there.

Service had not yet commenced, and the little congregation were scattered in groups of two or three around the porch, with the exception of a few old people who were resting themselves on the sedilia inside. On the whole, there was much rural, perhaps rude, simplicity and repose about the scene; with a slight shade, too, I thought, of loneliness. Some half dozen of the older people were gossiping in a subdued tone together, their attention being directed to an open grave. Never dreaming that I should know any thing of, or have aught of interest in, the poor remains for the reception of which this hollow in the rich red earth was dug, I cursorily enquired for whom it was intended; and they told me it was for Stephen Keel, the brother of my late worthy old friend of Moreton farm. Poor Jenny had only been two months wearing the widow's cap for her honest husband, and here had Stephen now followed James, and fallen asleep with his fathers also. *Eheu fugaces!* Last winter, as I sat in the capacious ingle by the bright fire with Jenny and James, the snow falling in broad flakes by the window, I believed that "we three should meet again" in the same chimney-corner

many a dark December; and since then, not only had one been drawn out of that little number, but a brother has followed him.

It is not often, I suspect, the little congregation of Butcombe find a stranger amongst them; and when they do, they treat him civilly. Farmer Morgan, who is one of the two great men of the parish, offered me a seat; and by way of making the compliment the greater, gave me one of his two pews entirely to myself, taking all his family into the other.

The Church is, I think, one of the smallest I have ever been in; but it is old and characteristic, and was originally far from meanly built; indeed, the few remnants of painted glass that in the east window still outlive some centuries of time, evidence better and more bountiful days. There is a rude gallery at the west end for the musicians—a very simple and rustic orchestra, comprising a great fiddle and a flute, and some singers, who did their best. As we worshipped in that remote place, I could not help thinking we resembled a "Church in the wilderness;" so quiet and secluded did we seem in that little, retired, and ancient building. This feeling was, perhaps, enhanced by the chastened and reverential manner of the Curate who performed the service, and who, though quite a young man, seemed to be in very delicate health; his countenance was "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought" and illness; and though his strength seemed barely equal to the duty, there was a resigned and, I thought, a cheerful tone of encouragement in his sermon, which he seemed, as it were, internally to apply to himself as well as to his hearers. To me there was a pleasing and, if I may use an apparent contradiction, a melancholy interest in his words; and I loitered about the porch after service, with one or two of the parishioners, in the hope that perhaps I might have an opportunity of exchanging a few words with one who, though quite a stranger, won so much upon me at first sight.

I was not mistaken; for he no sooner emerged from the porch, in his gown, with his surplice and bachelor's hood

on his arm, than he spoke to my neighbours, and I took occasion to enter into conversation with him. I found him quiet, scholar-like, and gentlemanly; he alluded incidentally to his health, and said with a sigh, that while clergymen ought to have the strength of giants for their work, they were too often the least favoured in this respect.

The last straggler of the congregation had some time disappeared when I wished him "good evening;" and as we left the churchyard, he in one direction and I in another, I could not help looking after him for some minutes together, as he walked slowly and thoughtfully towards his little cottage dwelling, doubtless to while away the long evening that yet remained, with his book and reflection.*

Butcombe has not been of late years very fortunate as a parish. Lonely and remote, it had few inducements for a resident Rector, who was not prepared to make sacrifices of personal comfort and good society for his solemn and sacred trust: its poor and uncultivated population have therefore been left pretty well, until within the last year, to themselves. It has, too, been a kind of family convenience, and has been chopped and changed about a good deal. The present incumbent is the Rev. Mr. Sayce, who, I believe, lives at Clifton, or some other equally agreeable retreat, in the neighbourhood of Bristol. I should like to go some day with a search warrant to the two Crescents, Caledonia Place, the Mall, &c., and find out all the reverend absentees and idlers who are there sheltered, in elegant (it may be) but inglorious ease, and pack them back, under a strong escort of elderly ladies, to their various flocks and parishes; having first told them that they were not ordained or inducted merely for their own pleasure and convenience, to receive tithes from the country, and make morning calls, and see company at Clifton. I should tell them too, in Sidney Smith's words, that their proper sphere lies less amongst the "soups of Dives, than the sores of Lazarus."

* A few months subsequently to the writing of this sketch, the poor young Curate was laid in the quiet little churchyard.

These, let me remark, are general observations: Mr. Sayce's place is, I have no doubt, now well and conscientiously filled by his Curate; but for a long time previous to the appointment of the latter, (which has only taken place, I think, within the last twelve months,) the parishioners of Butcombe, which perhaps required one as much as any other in Somersetshire, were without a resident pastor, as Mr. Sayce used to drive down on Sunday, do duty, drive back again, and leave his parishioners to Providence until the next Sabbath.

In my old and excellent friend Samuel Baker's time, the children of the parish had a most affectionate and attentive patron, who took the schools under his especial care and management.—I have not been at Butcombe since his death, but I recollect of old accompanying him more than once across from Aldwick: he used to assist in teaching the boys and girls himself, and once a year he gave them all round a new suit of clothes, and never had man or tailor a more primitive way of measuring for the same. His plan was to call them out one after the other, and take their dimensions with his walking-stick, which was quite as tall as the majority of the candidates: the altitude of each having been thus ascertained, he dotted him or her down on a piece of paper, and left the matter of fit altogether to the discretion of the fashioner. Boys and girls were all accommodated, according to what I used to call the *argumentum ad bacculum*. There was one poor blind boy, to whom Mr. Baker was particularly kind. Curious as it may seem, the lad used to go to school, and Mr. B. always took him home on Sundays with him to Aldwick to dinner.

I am sorry to say I forgot to inquire after the lad when I was last at Butcombe; but I shall drop a note to my friend Farmer Morgan on the subject.

Stoke Gifford.

I WISH people would not be so much given as they are to mislead men into a day's journey, by the off-hand, though deceptive, remark, "Oh, it is only a pleasant walk." By one of the grotesque edicts of the Emperor Heliogabalus, any one who invented a sauce, which was not approved of, was compelled to eat it, or rather live upon it for a given length of time; taking a lesson from the tyrant, I think I should be disposed to sentence some persons I know to just such another "pleasant walk," before breakfast, as their "easy idea of distances" subjected me to on Sunday, the——

I had never been at Stoke Gifford Church, so I asked a friend where it was, "Just by Stapleton" was his reply, "only a pleasant walk." Trusting to this information, and as my medical man had told me to take a little more walking exercise, I thought I would leave John Bunyan at home to chew his corn and the cud of fancy, and depend upon my own legs for the nonce. Instead of a pleasant walk, however, I found I was misled into a toilsome journey.

The first couple of miles were agreeable enough, for at Baptist Mills I met a little fellow who was going as far as Stapleton, and who made a very innocent and prattling companion as long as our roads lay together. I fell in with him in a very simple way; finding myself involved in the mazes of some bye-roads, I inquired of him if he could inform me the way to Stapleton; he said he was going there himself, and that if I had no objection there was a short and pleasant path through the fields, across which he would be my conductor. I readily accepted an offer made with all a boy's frankness, and in another moment we were gossiping away with as much freedom as if we had been friends since the flood. Unquestioned

he told me his little history in one breath; he was serving his time in Bristol to a draper, his relatives lived at Stapleton, and he was on his way to spend the Sunday with them; he spent most of his Sundays in the country, going out in the morning, and returning again at night.

In contemplating the great and general blessings of the Sabbath, as a divine institution, we do not stop, we have not time perhaps, to consider the thousand minute ways in which it is welcomed to each individual heart. The Spring comes on, and we feel the pleasant influence of reviving nature, but we do not stop to consider how every opening little bud, the primrose by the hedge, and the wild flower in the field, rejoices each in its separate and distinct indentity, as it evolves its little petals to drink in the beneficent influence of the blessed season. So it is with myriads of simple and humble hearts when Sunday arrives; they expand with the first ray of the Sabbath sun; and though all unconscious of their own silent devotion, they still insensibly send up to the God of the Sabbath the grateful incense, I might say the natural worship, of thankful and happy feelings for the holy gift. Here was a youth pent up in a close shop six days in the week; just fancy (as we may) the secret pleasure with which when he awakes on the seventh, he recollects it is Sunday, and that there is that morning a release from the captivity of the counter, that he has not to creep down from his bed to a dusty shop, and pin up, with cold fingers, an infinity of small articles and tempting finery in the windows, polish the brass plate in front, and all that. In winter a run across the fields to raise the ruddy glow on his cheeks, and a day's restoration to his own family, where instead of being with strangers, he feels he has an interest in each heart, make a happy change enough to the emancipated apprentice; but in the sultry summer season, how positively delicious to escape from a great crowded city, which is heated like an oven, and the flags beneath one's feet feel like a hot dresser; then every hawthorn tree with its clustered white head, every pleasant hedge-row with its crown of honeysuckles, seem to welcome the draper's lad to green fields and fresh air,

and you might think he was flying from a doomed city from the fact of his never looking back to the dense mass of bricks and mortar which he is fast leaving behind him for one day at least.

I was compelled once or twice to admonish my little companion to walk slower, for he skipped along as if my legs were as young and my heart as light as his. I asked him how he liked the early hours of closing, and he said *his* master did not observe them; they still kept open until about eight, they went to bed about ten.

"Then what do yo do with yourself in the mean time," said I, "do you go out?"

"No, the lads were not allowed to go out; they had a room where they sat, and sometimes read, and sometimes romped."

I inquired where he got books. He said he had a few of his own, that was all; a fact from which, I think, the religious and philanthropic, who are ever puzzling their brains for new methods of spending money and doing good, might take a hint. I would suggest "A Drapers' Lads' Lending Library," a title as beautifully alliterative as it is benevolently comprehensive.

"Then, as you are not allowed to go out in the evenings, my little friend, do you never taste fresh air but on Sundays?"

"Oh, yes, Sir, when we go out to match patterns," was his reply. "I like to be sent out to match patterns, especially if it is far off," continued the lad with much earnestness.

I had now got all my tiny fellow traveller's history, there was but one curiosity left to gratify. I confess he was such a hearty, frank, little fellow, I hoped he was a Churchman, so I asked him if he knew the Rev. Ricketts Bailey; he said yes, he heard him preach nearly every Sunday. "Then do you go to Stapleton Church," said I.

"Yes, and the Bishop goes there too."

For the sake of saying something, I inquired whether he would sooner be a bishop or a draper.

"I'd sooner be a draper," was his sincere but somewhat singular reply.

Having parted with my young friend at Stapleton, and given him a valedictory injunction, should he ever be offered a Bishoprick, even though it were no better than Sodor and Man, not to allow too inordinate a partiality or prejudice in favour of drapery to prevent him from accepting it, I continued my course in the teeth of a very sharp wind towards Stoke Gifford, and had several opportunities of regretting, before I got to the grand entrance gate of Her grace the Duchess Dowager of Beaufort, having been silly enough to leave John Bunyan behind me. The dust careered along the road in a kind of circling dance, and whirled round and round me like a winding sheet, until I thought I should be smothered. As I pulled the gate bell with one hand, I was obliged to hold my hat with the other, and had not breath enough to exclaim—

"Ho warder, ho! let the *portcullis* fall."

It was promptly opened for me, and I received from the porter the usual distinct directions as to my road, to go straight on until I came to something, and then to turn to the right, and then to the left, and then to the right again, and so on, until my ideas of dexter and sinister were completely confounded; so thanking him, and muttering to myself the safe maxim, *via trita via tuta*, I followed the beaten tract before me. I don't know the number of statutable miles that Stoke Gifford may be from Bristol, but I should think I must have walked two or three through the Park, before I got even a glimpse of the village, though I paused every half mile to look out for it, and deliberate with myself whether I should not turn back, so tired did I feel. It was in one of these breathing moments, as I gazed round me, half bewildered and whole vexed, that an envious gust of wind came and whipt off my hat. I don't think I ever gazed with more perplexity and distress at any thing than I did after my truant head gear, as it went rolling away, eloping, I might say, from its natural guardian with the east wind, spinning along and skipping up in the air with a wild levity that ill became the covering of so sedate and

so grey a head. To run after it, or think of following it was out of the question; tired and "winded" as I was, I could not have run ten yards, at that moment, to overtake a mitre, much less a twenty-four shilling beaver; all I could do was to look after it in helpless distress. I felt there was nothing for it but to leave it to its mad career, and pursue my road or turn back without it; it was taking the direction of Filton, and I had made up my mind to see it leap the next fence like a fox hunter, when it was suddenly turned by one of those capricious gusts which seem made to blow round a corner, and came circling back towards me, rolling like an iron hoop on its rim, though at some distance around me, as if, like a repentant prodigal, it was ashamed of its conduct, and hesitated to approach the indulgent owner it had so rashly deserted. It was a fortunate gyration so far as I was concerned, for before it could start on another onward race, or be carried off again, it was luckily intercepted by the trunk of a tree, where it was detained until I was enabled to come up to it. Having recovered the runaway, with the loss of a small portion of its fur, I placed it firmly on my head, and to prevent a similar or second escape, tied my old Indian silk pocket handkerchief over it and under my chin. The wind could no longer affect my hat, but as if in rage and disappointment at being foiled, it vented all its wrath in numberless other little ways, blowing furiously in my face, tossing the skirts of my coat wildly and indecorously about and above my head, and sweeping clouds of dust in my eyes. The winds since the days of Virgil were blustering bullies, but I determined not to yield, and made my way manfully to the road in time to see a light blue landeau fly drive by. "Whose is that?" said I to a farmer who joined me at the moment. "The parson's," was his reply; "Mr. Parker's."

"Then where does Mr. Parker live?" said I.

"In Bristol; he comes out every Sunday, in the morning one Sunday, in the evening the next."

"Then you have only one service in the week?"

"That's all."

Well, thought I, this is an easy way to manage a parish, one *fly*-ing visit, extended over two hours, and one service in seven days. So it was, however; the Rev. Mr. Parker lived at Kingsdown, and contracted with a flyman to carry himself and a written sermon, once a week, to a parish six miles off, to the spiritual supervision of which he is supposed to attend.

It was the merest chance in the world that I did not come on the wrong morning, and find the Church doors closed, as I suppose some people sometimes do, for Stoke Gifford is virtually without a clergyman, unless during two hours in the course of the week. I know there is much to be said on all sides in this case. The vicarage is worth only about £40 or £50 a-year, and this certainly is not more than sufficient to maintain a horse, let alone a clergyman with his family, who, if he have no other means, cannot certainly afford to educate his children in the country on such a stipend. His Grace of Beaufort has the lay impropriation, and perhaps we had best place the blame on his broad shoulders, though it will possibly become a question whether even the neglect of a nobleman justifies a clergyman in holding a miserable living, to which he cannot afford to do justice. It may be a difficult case to decide, but whoever has to bear the responsibility, the parishioners of Stoke Gifford, left without a resident clergyman, and with but one alternating service in the week, have reason to complain, and I believe do complain.

These lay impropriations, and the total absence of all obligations, which the owners seem to think they imply, are the only things that are ever likely to provoke me into becoming a revolutionist; they are one of the many proofs we have, that when the Church is plundered, and plundered she was wholesale at the Reformation, the people are defrauded. My Lord Duke of Beaufort's ancestors did no more, of course, than others did; took what they got, and perhaps took what they *did not* get. Yet, really, in these days of spiritual destitution, it is time that the descendants of those iron barons, since they no longer wear the gauntlet, should relax their gripe a little, and make some slight

restitution for centuries of sullen possession, in the shape of a more extended liberality to the Church. It does seem to me not quite the course which one might expect from a Conservative nobleman, that holding the large tithes of a considerable parish, and paying for his own broad domain to the Vicar little more than twenty pounds a-year, he should still permit the people to be without a resident clergyman, or even the ordinary opportunities of public worship. My Lord Duke! My Lord Duke! I have often sat at the Dolphin dinner, and looked with admiration on your ample bust, glistening with orders as you rose,

> "Above the rest
> In shape and gesture proudly eminent,"

to respond to some toast, when the very tables seemed to bound beneath the ecstatic applause of the company; and I myself have made my hands as red, and nearly as hot, as live coals, clapping the pompous periods about the Constitution, as they flowed in stately euphony from the courtly chief of the house of Somerset. But, my Lord Duke, there is a well-known adage about figures of speech being no condiment for a certain vulgar vegetable, (talking to polished ears, I would fain not clothe even common things in a coarse habit,) and one noon-day good act is worth a dozen after-dinner orations. Were I as bold as Nathan, I might perhaps have stolen on tip-toe behind your chair, while your ducal star flashed its dazzling effulgence on the admiring eyes of the surrounding citizens of Bristol, (than whom there are not in England a people for whose minds the name and notion of nobility have a greater fascination,) and whispered in your ear that one hundred pounds, paid from your rectorial tithes of Stoke Gifford,* towards providing a minister for a destitute parish, would have been worth and done more than three hundred and

* I suspect that in the broad possessions of his Grace, Stoke Gifford is almost altogether lost sight of. I heard a story, that one day this winter, when a fox ran from Wick Rocks to the Park, the Marquis of Worcester, as he rode through, inquired of some one close by, *whose place it was.*

sixty-five fine tropes about the Constitution, which are all very well in their way, I admit, and have the additional advantage of costing nothing.

Stoke Gifford is an old and primitive-looking little parish Church; it consists of a nave, chancel, and north aisle, with a little tower on the south side. It is, altogether, with its sober churchyard, a rude, simple, and not a very cheerful object. There are a few houses scattered about, and these collectively are dignified with the name of a village. The congregation are quite of a rustic character; and the edifice was so well filled I thought it a pity that where the population seemed ready to attend, they should have but one service on the Sunday. At the west end is a platform, from which the village choir perform with their own voices and two flutes; there are also several "great singers" amongst the congregation, who seem to join with amazing unction and energy.

The Queen's letter was read rapidly through after the Communion Service, and thrown down, when finished, with a flourish on the table; but not a word said about collection or contribution, that was all left to the imagination. The text had reference to the observance of the Sabbath; and the preacher got through the sermon, from beginning to end, in a most fluent and off-hand manner. He had a dash at "the bloody Chartists and the beastly Socialists," and a cut at the "wily Papists and subtle Tractarians;"* he told us about Luther's ink-stand and

* I hope the Vicar's pearls were not thrown before swine, for I should have thought that the simple congregation I saw could have never heard of *Tractarians*, unless from their parson; indeed, I question if there were three in the Church who could have spelt the word. The best plan would be to teach them, in this particular, as all primitive people are taught, with pictures; to paint a horrible monster, for instance, with goggle eyes and long horns, on a board, and call it a "*Tractarian!*" it would be found very useful to frighten all naughty children into propriety, and all restless ones to bed. I would particularly reccommend it to the use of nursery maids. Talking of *Tractarians*, I reccollect when we were all at first frightened about them, almost out of our senses, that excellent man and bulkward of Protestantism, the Rev. Martin Whish, had a convocation of True Believers at his vicarage, for the purpose of petitioning (the Arch

the plains of Marathon, and recited in sonorous cadence Lord Byron's poem on the death of Senacharib; I mean those sounding verses about the "Assyrian coming down like a wholf on the fold," and the relicts of Asshur, I beg pardon, "the widows of Asshur being loud in their wail." He was very energetic in his denunciations of those who broke the Sabbath, and very properly too; threatening with the judgments of heaven even those who saw a friend on Sunday. He, however, made a reservation in favour of works of necessity; under which head, I suppose, having a fly, horse, and man, from Bristol and back again, ten miles journey every Sunday, was included. Immediately in front of me was a family in deep mourning, who had evidently that day appeared for the first time in Church since the loss of some very near relative; upon this subject the preacher touched, towards the end of his discourse, and with some taste and good feeling, much more, I candidly confess, than was evinced in the foregoing part of his sermon; here there was a pleasing solemnity, as unlike the rattling part that preceded it, as two things could be, even though the former was enhanced by the poetic account of the slaughter of the Assyrians.

bishop of Canterbury, I think it was,) against them; when the assembly, however, came to compare notes, it was found that there was not one in the room who had read the "pestilential publications." This, however, presented, after all, but a very trifling difficulty; what every body said must be true, and every body said they were bad; so they were voted bad, as bad as bad could be. Some scoffer sent the story to the *Quarterly Review*, which stated the fact a few months afterwards, but did not give the *locus in quo* where it occurred; this was reserved for me.

Bleadon.

Bleadon is bounded on the East by the tailend of the Mendip hills, and on the West by a wide marsh; is four miles from Weston, and I can't say how many from Bridgewater. The parish is principally remarkable for its cattle and its Rector.

When I was passing by this Church to Lympsham some time ago, I was almost tempted to pay it a visit; however, I contented myself with approaching the stone cross, and pilgrim-like, registering a vow that the summer should not roll by, before I became better acquainted with the Rev. David Williams.

Accordingly, on Sunday last I kept my vow, and having breakfasted at Weston, turned John's head towards Uphill, soon after nine o'clock. I at first intended to have gone to Morning Service at Bleadon; but having heard that the Rev. Gentleman indulged his congregation with a sermon only in the afternoon, I changed my route and resolution and rode to Hutton, an account of which, however, I shall defer for some future paper.

Having had prayers at Hutton, and dinner at an old friend's, at half-past two, I proceeded to afternoon service at Bleadon.—There is, for the most part, no object in English scenery, that has more charms for the eye, or interest for the heart, than the old Church standing out, with its venerable grey spire, above and amidst orchard and homestead, like the holy patriarch of the parish, which is ever before the eye of those who dwell around it, and towards which each, who has grown up under its shadow, looks from his cottage door with reverence and affection, especially if he who ministers within its solemn precincts be one, who by his Christian fidelity and character is calculated to attract the love and esteem of those over whose eternal interests he has been ordained to watch.

For my part, I never ride along the road and see one of those sacred edifices, encompassed by what Cowley calls "its old contemporary trees," with indifference, or without feeling a disposition to fasten John's bridle to the little gate, and walk round the churchyard, and read the lettered headstones; as the heart, instead of being deterred from the contemplation of the scene by the surrounding memorials of the dead, is instinctively, and as it were mysteriously, attracted to the sacred object by stronger and deeper yearnings on this very account.

Bleadon, as a parish Church, formed perhaps one of the first exceptions to this general feeling. It is a good building, but rendered cold and wretched to the eye by neglect and nakedness. On every side you behold traces of a Church, which seemingly has none to take care of it—a broken pathway, a bare, shrubless, treeless burial-ground, a broken roof, and decayed wall. You miss, in fact, all the "circumstances" which make an English country Church so peculiar and pleasing a sight. The grass of the churchyard had been eaten bare by the yearling of some poor parishoner, to whom "God's acre" had been let or lent, and as I looked round, I thought I never saw before so desolate a scene, taking all things into consideration. I was told there was not one dozen in attendance in the morning, and in the afternoon there might have been two, a sorry proportion for so extensive a parish.

The interior of the Church, was quite as cheerless to my mind as the exterior—bare, and cold, and dreary; one pew was filled by a mourning party, and in the others were scattered a few showily-dressed young women, and still fewer men seemingly of the class of farmers; but there were little or no poor, and no children that I could see, the parish being without a single parochial school of any kind. The Rev. David Williams was in the reading-desk when I entered, going through the service, just as you would suppose the service to be gone through in such a Church as I have described. He seemed to be suffering from flatulency, for at every other verse he was obliged to

pause, afterwards wiping his mouth with an old brown handkerchief, and occasionally varying the act by using the sleeve of his surplice (which was far from clean) for the purpose. There was no singing or musical service whatever, the Rev. Gentleman objecting to it, as I have heard, on the grounds that it affects his head, but he has never complained of it affecting his heart. On some occasions, however, the Uphill singers have come over, and been permitted to "perform;" but not very long since, being rather too energetic in their exertions, they were publicly, and from what little I know of country choirs, perhaps justly, rebuked by the Rector for their overpowering vocalism.—"If you can't sing better," said he, "don't sing at all—shut up that noise!" This familiar and almost household mode of censure is not very unfrequent, however, at Bleadon; he has occasionally paused in the midst of the Psalms, to correct the clerk for reading too fast or too loud, but by way of reprisals the clerk has sometimes had to correct the parson for reading the wrong psalm, an incident of this kind having occurred, I think, on Whit-sunday last. At another time some one's dog followed the owner into Church, and attracting Mr. Williams's notice, he called out, "John, turn out that dog—people should not make a kennel of the Church"—an observation which would have been not merely justifiable but meritorious, if there did not happen to be a yearling bellowing in the churchyard at the moment, where it was doing all it possibly could, by permission of the parson, to get fat on the "green graves" of his departed parishioners.

I wish, however, it was only of mere oddities or personal peculiarities I had to compain; but I fear I shall be compelled to show by-and-by that other things are to be alluded to, and other matters mooted. But let me first go through the service, and refer to the Church, so far as I saw of both, on the occasion of my visit. As I said, there is no singing, the clergyman having ascended in his surplice from the reading desk to the pulpit. I can fancy some of the advocates of the gown now bristling up with jealous alarm, and ready to exclaim against the Rev.

David Williams as a Puseyite, and perhaps anxious to engage in a crusade against him. In this they can please themselves; and if they could stir up the namesake of the Royal Psalmist to do a great many things that ought to be done, and are left undone in the parish, perhaps I should not be disposed to dissuade them from their determination; but with regard to the surplice, I should think the Rev. David Williams cares as little about Puseyism as Evangelicism; he has worn the surplice since his induction, and as many besides himself do for this reason, amongst others, that it saves the necessity of changing.

The text was, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." With the matter of the discourse, I have no complaint to make, and I am not the less disposed to be pleased with it because I think I heard it before. However, it contained quite enough, had clergyman, and congregation, and Church-goer, chosen to follow it, to have made us all that good men and Christians ought to be; it was full of excellent morals, and set forth the misery and folly of gratifying the lusts of the flesh, while it set forth the solid and lasting happiness of a life well spent. The language was good, and the sentences well turned, and whether made in London or Bleadon, composed by the Rev. David Williams, or sold by Burns, it still taught a solemn, I will say an awful lesson, which I wish we were all willing to learn. It was preached in fourteen minutes, the entire service occupying, I should think, something more than three quarters of an hour.

"Cold, cold," muttered I to myself, as the last words of the blessing died away in that cheerless Church, and I placed my prayer book in my pocket, and brushed the dust and straws from my hat, which I had taken from under the seat; "this is certainly not a gratifying sight to a churchman, and a lover of the Church." I don't know indeed when I left God's house with less lightsome feelings; I saw nothing to gratify me, nothing that showed that a proper pride and interest were taken in the decent and becoming condition of the edifice, and the solemn celebration of its services. The worshippers were few, and

the worship cold. The priest delivered his part in a tone of apathy, and the replies of the people were faint and languid; the reading of the clergyman was not good, that of the poor clerk barbarous; the pews were dusty, and yellow damp-stains disfigured the walls of the chancel; there was no altar screen or reredos of any kind, and a rude railing enclosed a ruder communion table: some windows in the chancel had been roughly stopped up, and in fact nothing was wanting to make an originally good parish Church, a poor, wretched, desolate structure. It has a fair tower, and a very fair specimen of a stone pulpit; the former was struck, some twelve or fourteen years ago, by lightning, but I question if the stroke of neglect has not since proved more ruinous to the edifice at large.

On leaving the Church, I stood for awhile in the churchyard, and allowed the little congregation (some of whom, from the late hour at which they arrived, could not have been more than sixteen or seventeen minutes altogether within the sacred edifice,) to pass by me, with the intention of having, if possible, a little serious conversation with the Incumbent, on the state of the building; for though there was no Uriah in the case, I determined David should not be without his Nathan. On second consideration, however, I changed my mind, and resolved to reserve for print all I had to say on the subject.

Those who have taken the trouble of reading these sketches, will probably by this time have discovered that whatever I am, I am not an ascetic, harsh-judging enthusiast; and that I think there is much more piety and virtue in the world than many are disposed to give it credit for. But still there are in my mind degrees of responsibility, the urgency of which no man ought to conceal from himself, and which, were he even so disposed, he ought not to be permitted to do. The Rev. David Williams has the parish of Bleadon, which, as I am informed, is worth £630 a year; he has also the parish of Kingston Seymour, which I dare say is worth between three and four hundred more; so that altogether he may be said to have about £1000 a year out of the

Church; for this, he does at Bleadon two services and one sermon a week, such as I have described, and nothing more. I speak of Bleadon only, for I have not been at Kingston Seymour; but I may fairly presume things are not better managed there, than in the parish where the Rector is resident. There is no school of any kind at Bleadon; nor have I heard that the Rev. David Williams ever made a single effort to establish one there, and I wish for his own sake that any one could convince me my information was not correct. It is true that some few years ago, two or three young ladies, daughters of respectable farmers in the parish, were impelled by the deplorable prospect before their eyes, to get up a school, to which the poor people seemed willing and even pleased to send their children; but the death of some, and the marriage of others, sadly diminishing the number of those who taught, the school fell to the ground, and the children of the poor were cast once more upon the roads, in idleness and mischief, for want of teachers; when it was the part of the Rev. David Williams not merely to have upheld the institution which they so amiably set on foot, but by anticipating the charitable act, to have prevented the appearance of being so far taught his duty by those whose spiritual guardian he is supposed to be. As I went into Church, I saw some boys idling about the gate; I spoke to them, and they seemed smart enough; and I could not help pitying the poor children, who with the capacities to learn, had none to teach them, and none, comparatively speaking, to care for them. A week or two ago I gave a shilling to teach the children of the poor Irish; I think I should be disposed to double the amount, if charity would begin nearer home, and some benevolent people out of the parish of Bleadon would undertake to establish a school in it. As I have no wish to suppress any circumstance I know, which may redound to the credit of the Rector, it is but fair to say, that he did not oppose the school, or discourage it, while he contributed one pound a year towards its maintenance; but then he neither originated nor maintained it, and I insist it was his business to have

done one and the other, whereas all the active interest he took in it, did not amount to more than a twenty shilling subscription. The parochial order of things was inverted; the parishioners went to the parson, to beg his assistance to start a school, instead of the parson going to them: passive and at ease in his rectory, he saw it rise—passive and at ease in his rectory, he saw it fall; he saw the school shut up, and the children stray forth once more in ignorance and idleness into the roads and fields. But it it is not merely that there is no school,—there is, I think, no parochial charitable association whatever in the place, and it is not to be wondered at, considering all these circumstances, that the ranters should have established a preaching room, and I believe some kind of a Sunday school in the place; their vehement groanings may be heard at a considerable distance, but whether they reach the parsonage or not I can't say; if they do they give the owner very little trouble, for the namesake of the royal psalmist is not very jealous of the spiritual allegiance of his people.

As I walked home from Church I fell into company with a poor man, (a labourer I believe,) and hoping that the Rector of Bleadon made up for his omissions in other respects by parochial visitations, I enquired, (and sincerely hoped that my question would be answered in the affirmative,) if he often called to see the parishioners as a clergyman, if he visited the sick, &c. The reply I received removed no weight from my spirits; I shall not give our conversation, and sincerely hope much of what I heard was without foundation.

"This world," says Locke, "has people of all sorts;" and if the same thing may also, to some extent, be predicated of the Church, I rejoice to say that Bleadon is far from a specimen of the majority of the parishes of England. The Church, as *the* Church, has an *existence* independent of her ministers; but it is on her ministers, under heaven, her *efficiency* depends. And it is consolatory and delightful to look abroad, and see what a body of "living efficiency" the Church contains in her clergy, to see the number of

hardworking, painstaking men, who are in the ministry, devoting themselves with a conscientious earnestness to the service of the Church, and with an indifference to the world's goods and the world's wealth, which shows that a deep sense of their responsibility is the all-absorbing consideration of their lives. I wish the general rule were without an exception.

I have no desire to seem even to savour of cant, and I have no relish for censure for its own sake; but I should be glad, Nathan like, to look the Rev. David Williams in the face, and tell him that ministers were not ordained merely to carry out the Tithe Commutation Act, and to live in a good house, enjoy themselves six days, and have two short services on the seventh. A man incurs a grave responsibility when he receives £600 or a thousand a year, for being a ministering servant in God's Church, a responsibility which does not end with this world; an earthly Diocesan is not all we have to please, there is a Bishop above, and a visitation to come, which we all must look forward to. I do not say that Mr. Williams has not done his duty, he knows best himself whether he has or not—whether as a clergyman, receiving large emoluments out of the Church, he can conscientiously say he has done all that could be expected of him towards the Church, and the people committed to his charge; whether, when he sits down in his parsonage at night, surrounded by the comforts which the patrimony of religion has provided for him, or draws on his surplice on Sunday, and sees the few people scattered through his cheerless Church, he can feel he has done all that he could do. This is a searching question which every clergyman ought to ask himself, and which we cannot evade for ever; for though we may defer it to our last moments, conscience will ask it, and distinctly too, in these last moments. The Rector of Bleadon is quite capable of putting the question to himself, for he is a man of far from mediocre ability; judging, indeed, from what I know of him, he is a man of very considerable natural intelligence and acquirements, and capable of being a great aid and ornament in the Church, and I

shall be glad the next time I pass that way to find that, acting not upon my hints but the hints of his own common sense and awakened fidelity, he has established schools, and placed himself in that position which a clergyman should always occupy in his own parish.

Coalpit Heath.

On a clear, bright day, about four years ago, (I cannot speak precisely as to time,) three members of the Church Building Society, to whom the spiritual destitution of this part of the country had been represented, alighted from their carriage on the common, and accompanied by an old and respectable resident in the district, proceeded on foot across its little wooded heath, to find out "a place for the Lord, a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." They had not walked very far, when their attention was attracted to a smooth green spot of glade, adjoining the road, where the heath opening out, discovers, on a little eminence on the opposite side, the old-fashioned rural hostelry, "The Ring of Bells." Sheltered on the north by a little ridge of hills and some old trees, the situation was pleasant and picturesque, and the lark, starting up at their feet, soared heavenward, singing his song of gladness, as though he would invite with his sweet omen the selection of that very site for the sacred structure. I am unable to say whether the incident struck the party in this sense or not, for there would have been no impropriety in regarding it as auspicious; but they almost immediately came to a stand, and before the "little songster" in its upborne flight was inaudible above their heads, they had made their selection, and that smooth turf, green with the vegetation of summer, was determined on as the place where the future Church of St. Saviour should stand, and where daisy and buttercup then grew, it was resolved that pillar and porch and pointed arch should rear their solemn proportions:—

> "Be this the chosen site. The virgin sod,
> Moistened from age to age by dewy eve,
> Shall disappear, and grateful earth receive
> The corner stone from hands that build to God."

Two colliers, at some short distance, were watching the movements of the group. "They be seeing about a raylway," said one of the carbonari. "No," replied his companion, "I did hear Mr. Hewett say as how we were going to have a new Church on the Heath; they be Parsons."

The other offered an observation which seemed to imply, that as they had meeting-houses enough, they did not want a Church; but the conformation of his neighbour's mind was more orthodox, for he said, meeting-houses might do very well in their way, but he should like to see "a *real* Church on the Heath, and to hear its bells upon Sunday, and to have a real parson of their own to talk to them by the road side and the pit's mouth."

His companion, who took part in the field meetings himself, was still sceptical, and hinted that poor people would not go to Church and hear a fine gentleman in a gown; but the other stoutly held a contrary opinion. And he was right; for the Church of St. Saviour has now been open little more than four months, and this in a district hitherto destitute of every means of public worship, but such as has been afforded by dissenters, and yet there is hardly a Church in the diocese more fully and freely attended. The field, in fact, was a good one, and an active clergyman might look for abundant fruits; there is, perhaps, nowhere a better class of collier population; peaceful and well-disposed, they seem to have at once appreciated the privilege and opportunity presented in the erection of a Church amongst them, by the readiness with which they crowded to its sacred courts from the various conventicles around.

The character of the collier has been found, indeed, here, as elsewhere, favourable for receiving religious impressions; the tone of his mind, notwithstanding his rough exterior, being susceptible, not merely of solemn, but even gentle and tender emotion; a disposition by no means inconsistent with a tendency to superstition, which is very manifest amongst this class, arising, perhaps, as in the case of sailors, from their passing their lives in the midst

of danger, which, as it were, makes the interval between the two worlds more brief and shadowy to their imaginations; this is apparent in their repugnance to use the newly consecrated churchyard, and the habit which they have of leaving work immediately after an accident has occurred in any of the pits. This proneness to superstition, however, has, if I may use the expression, its counter advantages in the utter absence of infidelity, as well as in their great readiness to avail themselves of religious opportunities. From these circumstances, and the long want of Church ministrations amongst them, dissent has been and is prevalent; but the people show a very general disposition and almost alacrity to avail themselves of the privileges now presented, and to interest themselves in the structure, its services, &c., with that warm-heartedness which characterizes all their acts and affections. They have, for instance, without solicitation, volunteered their subscriptions for a Church clock and organ, and expressed their wish for week-day services in the evening. There is, too, about the inhabitants and their dwellings a character of antiquity, a sort of simple and rude ancestral prestige attached to the place, which has an interest for those who look upon such things as indicative of more than outward appearance. Some of the farm houses seemed to be several centuries old, with ceilings, carvings, &c., of the date of Elizabeth and James I., the same families inhabiting them for hundreds of years, as the present residents may look back "in humble pride" to generations of "rude forefathers," living and dying for many successions on the same homesteads. This, and the fact of the people being generally in good condition, there being *no* actual poverty, gives an air at once primitive and comfortable to the place and people.

The afternoon service, as in almost all country parishes, is here the best attended. Nor is it perhaps very surprising that after a week's hard labour in these deep and awful coalpits, beyond "the warm precincts of the cheerful day," the tired collier should lie a little longer a bed, or seize the opportunity afforded by the day of rest to sit by his

hearth side amongst his children an hour or so on the sharp winter's Sunday morning. I don't defend the practice; on the contrary, I think if the collier and agricultural labourer could divest themselves of that indolent habit of loitering by their own firesides, or basking themselves by their own cottage doors on Sabbath mornings, and rise betimes, so as to be dressed and ready for service, they would find it more refreshing to body and soul; but the fact is, I fear, too generally such as I have described it, though I allude to it in the case of Coalpit Heath rather for the purpose of praise than otherwise, for the morning attendance, though not quite equal to that in the afternoon, was, notwithstanding these natural drawbacks, very good and gratifying.

As I rode by the Horse Shoe, at Downend, a bright frosty sunshine broke forth, and lit up the winter landscape with its cheerful light; and as if to make the hour and scene more exhilirating, I had not gone much further when the sister peals of Westerleigh and Coalpit Heath struck out, and gave a voice to the Sabbath morning.

At the same side of the road, and just before you come to the Church, is the quaint little parsonage, looking as old-fashioned, with its gables and gothic windows, as if it had been built some centuries ago, though now for the first time brought to light. It is what is called a Camdenian parsonage; that is, built upon the plan and principles of the Camden Society, an incorporation of antiquarians and antiquated bachelors, who have great ideas of architectural taste, but little or none of domestic utility; for though their structures are in admirable character and keeping with the ecclesiastical edifices to which they are attached, everything appertaining to interior arrangement and convenience is considered of secondary importance to mullioned windows and spandrilled doors. In fact, such an accommodation as a day or night nursery never seems to enter the heads of those cloistered cenobites; the bed rooms are the size of china pantries, but china pantries there are none; there is an orchard, but no place to stow away the apples, and pigs and poultry could have never entered their

imagination, as no provision appears to have been made for these interesting creatures, to whose merits in conjunction we are indebted for that culinary combination commonly known as "bacon and chicken." Where the learned Camdenians usually fail is in their erudite ignorance of all family affairs. The monastic thought can be traced in all their interiors; it would be very well if the dark diminutive rooms were only to be inhabited by a gownsman and his gyp, but as clergymen are mostly married men, and with very full quivers, it would be well if the little "olive branches" were more frequently admitted into their architectural intentions than they seem to be. I have not been inside the parsonage at Coalpit Heath, but I should not be surprised if it was such as I have described, though I must confess it is a pretty and picturesque object to look upon from the road, presenting a most "tempting aspect" for comfort and coziness.

"Five hundred sittings, free and unappropriated for ever," are the terms upon which the grants were made to Coalpit Heath; in fact, the whole Church is "one Christian commonage," there not being even an enclosed pew for the Lords of the Manor. The sittings are backed benches with gothic ends and finials of fleur-de-lis; and as the reading-desk and lectern are on the same level with the rest, the clergyman and congregation seem like one large family supplicating before the sanctuary, earnest and united in their prayers. Few readers have an idea of the different character which this seemingly simple incident gives to the worship of the Church. The clergyman in a great high box, I had almost called it booth, elevated above the people, with his back to the altar, and looked full in the face by some hundreds, is far too much of an object in most of our old Churches, and in a measure, I often think, tends to divert that deep mental and almost abstract attention which should be directed to the Deity during our public as well as our private orisons. In the modern, or rather revived arrangements, however, such as we see at Coalpit Heath, and some other places, this is not the case; a little low bench for the clergyman's

prayer-book, and a bare lectern or stand for the bible, alone distinguish his situation, and in this simple way he seems to offer up his petitions, in equal humility with the rest, to Him who has promised to be in the midst of those who are gathered together. This at least was the impression which the service at Coalpit Heath conveyed to me; it seemed at once more humble and more earnest for this reason; and though I can hardly account for it, why one part of the prayers particularly attracted my attention at the time, yet after that beautifully-selected passage in the Litany, "O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us, the noble works that thou didst in their days, and in the old time before them," I thought I never heard the response, "O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us for thine honour," breathed forth with more impressive earnestness, than by that congregation of honest colliers, occupying their open benches, free and unappropriated for ever. There was something in the idea too, I thought, in keeping with the character of the place and people; an old standing but humble and primitive race, whose calling is surrounded by circumstances of danger, experiencing themselves, and publicly confessing to having traditionally heard from their honest but unlettered forefathers, the "noble works" of mercy which had been done in their days, and in the old time before them.

There was, however, a sprinkling of others besides colliers in the congregation; but these were errants from a neighbouring parish or two, as the Incumbent, if he does not take especial care, will get the reputation, I had almost written *im*putation, of a popular preacher in the region round about. Though the Church has been open for no more than four or five months, the great care that has been taken to render its services such as they ought to be, is very manifest in every portion, but in none more than in the musical part. The people, I am told, and indeed I could perceive, actually take a delight in it. The organ is played by a young lady, the daughter of the principal resident in the district, Mr. Hewett, who

has taken an interest in the good work, praiseworthy to him and fortunate for his humble neighbours; and a really effective choir of honest colliers, men and boys, now chaunt portions of the service, not from a pent-up organ loft, but from their open sittings in the north aisle, with more expression than many of our town singers attempt to do. The "Kyrie Elison" (Lord, have mercy upon us,) was remarkably well done. On the whole, I thought the chaunting better than the psalms; the tunes selected for the latter, being, for the most part, too slow and heavy. I was struck with the number of boys who attended the Church, one side aisle being quite full of them; they behaved themselves not merely negatively well, but their demeanour was decorous and respectful to a degree. Indeed, the honest colliers are not only pleased and proud to have a Church of their own in the district, but with that reflective turn, peculiar to their class and calling, the very labourers begin, I am told, to draw contrasts between the solemnity of the Church service and the dissenters' worship. A respectable informant assured me he overheard a remark to this effect, from one to the other as they left the Church; "Well, they do things rather different from the place on the hill," (*i. e.* the meeting house.) Their partiality for the Church, now that the privilege is afforded them, is also evidenced in their eagerness to possess themselves of prayer books, numbers of which have been sold by the Incumbent; so that the most gratifying results may be anticipated from the foundation of St. Saviour's in this primitive and populous district; and the traveller who three years ago rode by a spot where the hare made its form and the lark its nest, would now be surprised, not merely to see it occupied by a structure of beautiful and solemn character, but to find hundreds flocking in Christian congregation to its porch on a Sabbath afternoon.

The building itself is admitted to be one of the most correct and characteristic country Churches that has been erected for years; it is of the early Decorated, a style of Gothic architecture most appropriate, in my opinion,

from its simple detail and free and graceful outline, for rural ecclesiastical edifices. There are two side aisles, separated from the centre by rows of plain and well proportioned arches; but the two features about the fabric which struck me as truly beautiful, were the chancel and south porch; the former, which is distinguished rather than divided from the body of the Church by an open screen, is floored with encaustic tiles, and lit by an East and two South windows, all of painted glass; the altar is approached by two stone steps, and the appearance of the whole solemn and subdued, and quite in the character of a sanctuary.

I believe the expense of the "storied windows" was principally raised by the present Incumbent, since his appointment; and I wish this beautiful and suitable mode of ornament were as generally introduced into new Churches as possible or practicable. It cannot be very difficult to do so from the present price of painted glass; it is so moderate that I am told you can have the twelve Apostles at sixteen shillings the square foot, and any number of the Minor Prophets on the same terms; local saints, shields, and patrons, Bishops, and blazonry, can also be purchased to any amount, and there is doubtless discount for cash included. The archangels with censors, in the head of the East window of Coalpit Heath, cost no more.

I hope they will be able to purchase a clock, for more than one reason. A Church clock is a cheerful thing in a parish, and is of use, not merely as economizing time and telling the passage of day and night to the cottager in his house, the labourer in the field, and the collier by the pit's mouth, for as

"Sands make the mountain, moments make the year;"

But it tends, as it were, to a kind of parochial centralization, making the Church tower the recognised point of attention and attraction to all the population. It is a social thing too to hear its voice, until the inhabitants

become acquainted with and almost have an affection for it, and are familiar with its face and every figure on it, so that it gradually grows to be the companion, counsellor, and friend of the surrounding people. Another thing, it might induce a more punctual attendance at Church, a virtue which rural congregations seldom have, and which that of Coalpit has yet to learn, for the old-fashioned wooden latch was going, and the wide South door creaking on its hinges, long after the second lesson.

The Christmas dressing had not yet been taken down, at the time of my visit; and I must say I never before saw a Church decorated with such good taste; it was not a mere bundling together of laurel boughs, but the capitals of the piers were wreathed round with fillets of ivy:—

"A rare old plant is the ivy green;"

While tendrils of the same hardy parasite hung in pendants down their shafts; similar foliage was festooned round the heads and down the sides of the chancel windows, while a great bough of dark yew towered above the chancel screen, casting its broad shadow on the encaustic tiles beneath.

In the brief absence of the Incumbent, the Rev. the Principal of Bishop's College performed service, and preached a sound and sensible sermon. The Incumbent, however, is the Rev. J. R. Woodford, whose style of preaching I have already noticed in one of the city Churches, St. John the Baptist, of which he was then Curate. The manifest ability and originality of his sermons attracted many who looked for thought and matter more than "sound and fury" when he was doing duty in the city; and when he was "translated" to Coalpit Heath, (which had previously been refused by the Rev. Mr. Hunt,) it was fancied that he would fire over the poor colliers' heads and be of little service; but as a plain friend of mine said, the poor colliers liked "a nut of thought" as well as other people, and can crack it too, for they crowd the Church; and the Incumbent, not satisfied

with mere pulpit exercise alone, works up the new ground with all that strength of hope and activity which belongs to five or six and twenty summers. He has not waited for those committed to his charge to come to him; he has found them out in their cottages and at their coal pits, and made himself acquainted with their habits of thought and life. I used sometimes to look in to hear him at St. John's, and I fancied he had then rather a tendency now and again to insert a sprig in favour of celibacy. As an old bachelor myself, I may be a disinterested authority on this matter, and must say, now that he has got a Church, I hope more matured notions (to say nothing of the prejudicial influence of such doctrines on surplice fees) will induce him rather to dehort from a practice which I, as a celibate, may claim some right to say I never thought meritorious.

The churchyard is extensive, and enclosed by a low wall, well built and in keeping with the Church; but as I said before, the colliers have a superstitious reluctance to inter in a new burial-place, and I think the ground has not yet been broken by a single grave. The entrance to the churchyard is a covered one, called a Lych Gate, a piece of architecture now unfrequent, but of ancient and interesting application. It was here, beneath this arched covering, the bier on which the body was borne rested, until the stoled priest met it, and then preceded the bearers to the Church porch or grave, repeating the solemn words, "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord." I would ride over, I think, expressly to the first funeral at Coalpit Heath, if I thought the old and solemn custom of the Lych Gate were to be carried out at the sepulture.

Now as to the schools; there is no regular building, I believe, at present, for this purpose, though it is intended to erect one, to comprehend a master's residence, and a residence for the sexton, in a style corresponding to the Church. I believe the schools are temporarily held in the pay room, and there are ninety children on the books already. There is also an evening school for adults,

amounting to twenty-five. Both are under the superintendence of the clergyman, and music, I understand, on Hullah's plan, is taught.

As I returned, between Coalpit Heath and Downend, I was overtaken by a lady (whom I had seen in Church) in a pony carriage, and was about to make way for her to pass, on the principle of *place aux dames*, when she pulled up, and not a little to my surprise accosted me as the Church-Goer. I felt a momentary inclination to equivocate a little, when a glance at my brown coat convinced me it would be useless, and perhaps wrong; so I merely lifted my hat, allowing her to interpret the salutation for assent or not, just as she should think proper. She said she read my rural rides, and was pleased to add, "with pleasure;" and though I confess I felt the compliment flow like wine and oil into my old foolish self-conceited breast, I could do nothing but look sheepish and stammer; but whether it was to increase my embarrassment, or through kindness, she continued to say pretty things of my various papers, until my confusion began to wear away, and I found myself gradually growing as vain as a cockatoo, feeding upon praise as the latter would upon Coriander seeds, as a matter of course. My fair co-traveller informed me that I had created "quite a sensation" (just think of that, and say if there is not some excuse for my vanity!) at Coalpit Heath, which she had just left; and that serious hospitable designs to detain me for dinner were being formed, by Mr. Hewitt and others, when I escaped, and that even my friend James, at the "Ring of Bells," on being informed of my identity, had many "compunctious visitings of nature" at finding he had taken coin from the Church-Goer for a feed of corn for so orthodox an animal as John Bunyan; though if he wishes to satisfy his conscience, he may deposit the same on a plate at the next public collection, or pay it over to the credit of the future Church clock. "But," said the "ladie faire" of the pony phaeton, "I have followed fast, that you may not give me also 'the slip,' at Downend, in the same way." O, thought I, this is a delightful fellow-

traveller, for she administers food to my vanity, and seed cake and sherry wine (for of such her words, I saw, savoured or were suggestive) to the body.

I mention this circumstance for two purposes, in acknowledgment of the kindness of the lady in question, and to account for another circumstance, namely, that she or somebody else must have informed the Incumbent, (who was that day absent, eating his own or somebody else's plum pudding,) or perhaps the churchwardens, of my visit, for I received a day or two after the following note:—

"In reference to the Schools, could you introduce a statement to this effect—The cost of the Church having exceeded, by a large sum, what was anticipated, certain sums calculated on for the Schools have been obliged to be appropriated to former purpose; it is hoped to make up the deficiency by public subscription."

Now, there can be no misunderstanding the object of this; it is an innocent and very allowable little stratagem to inform the public that the sweet country Church and schools of Coalpit Heath are still fair objects for Christian liberality; and though I am not, as a principle, fond of making my little papers the media of public monetary appeals, I have no objection to second the writer in the present instance, and tell those good old gentlemen and ladies who are amongst my readers, and who now, spectacle on nose, may be spelling through my loosely written sketch, to put their hands in their pockets and see if there is ever a stray sovereign or half which they may send (not to me, for I am not fond of such commissions of almonry,) but to the Incumbent, who will no doubt find good use for it, and thank the donor in private or public, as his or her taste may tend.

Uphill.

A NUMBER of people were emerging from lodges, which looked as pleasant as plaster of Paris and cast-iron could make them, towards Weston Church, when I turned my face and feet in another direction, having that day determined to say my prayers amongst the simple congregation of Uphill, apart from the crush of a popular place of worship.

Having chartered a donkey's chair, and engaged a fellow, large enough to carry the whole concern, to guide the patient "Jerusalem pony," as, I believe, the animal is called in the popular parlance of the place, I arrived at my destination, having suffered no inconvenience save a little from the flying sand.

There are two Churches at Uphill; the one on the hill, a very conspicuous object from Weston, and in the erection of which the Evil One is said to have taken so active and lively an interest, is the oldest. It is only necessary to allude incidentally to the popular and profane legend in connection with this structure, and which could have been invented but to shelter the preposterous judgment of the projectors in selecting the site, for there was no necessity for Satan's interference in the affair, as the Ecclesiastical Commissioners were not then insolvent, and could not have stood in need of such extraneous and invidious aid.

The new Church is of recent date, having been built in 1843, partly on a foundation of pincushions, some of the funds having come from the proceeds of a popular bazaar. It is a very pretty edifice of a compo. character, the decorated being the prevailing style; the tower is singular but not unpleasing, the angles being formed of disengaged columns of masonry; the exterior is ornamental, but the inside is plain yet impressive.

Service is performed in either Church on alternate Sundays. I think I have heard it was at first discontinued in the old, but was obliged to be resumed, owing to the exertions of little Paine, the barrister, who lives on the hill; and who, though a dissenter himself, and having given a site and stones for a chapel close by, was seized with a desire, for some reason or other of his own, to keep up the custom.

There being no bell ringing as I approached, though it was then nearly half-past ten, I concluded this could not be the Sunday for the new Church; but on a second and nearer view I saw a few people standing by the door. They consisted of a man in black, a man in livery, a man in medley cloth, a man on crutches, an old woman, and four boys.

I enquired why the bell was not ringing, or if they had one, and was told, that one bell "had gone," and another would "go" as soon as the "passon" had come into Church.

I stood by the porch awaiting his advent, and counted the stragglers as they arrived, but cannot say I admire seeing a congregation assembling to no summons, and to a silent Church.

"They seem to be very sparing of their labour here," said I to the man on crutches, "or are they afraid of wearing out the bells?" The man on crutches, however, was far too cautious a fellow to risk an opinion, for he merely shook his head.

I had waited about six minutes, when a gentleman, with glasses, white neckcloth, and a sporting cut-away black coat, with horizontal pockets, from one of which protruded a highly coloured orange handkerchief, entered the gate. I am not one to draw uncharitable conclusions from the form or fashion of a man's garments. Yet, though I had some suspicion it might be the clergyman, from the colour of his neckcloth, there was quite as much that savoured of the first of September, as of the thirty-nine articles about him. Be this as it may, however, he could not have passed me half a minute when the bell

began to ring, and turning round I saw him in his surplice in the reading desk.

Usually, the appearance of the clergyman in this place is a signal to cease ringing; but here a contrary practice seems to prevail, and when the congregation should have been sitting silent and solemn in their pews, previous to rising, they were hurrying in, and the sacred structure itself reverberating with noisy echoes. It looked to me as if the whole arrangement were adopted with the most strict regard to the economy of time, and was so ordered that neither parson nor people should lose any more of their precious moments within God's holy house than was absolutely necessary for the recital of the necessary number of prayers; the short and impatient bell seemed to my imagination to say, "come in, come in, we're ready to begin," and it was not without some misgivings, I assure you, I obeyed the summons.

A friend of mine told me, that when he was once in Wales, he asked the host of some country inn the name of his clergyman, and the Cambrian replied, "Mr. Jones is our reglar parson, but Mr. Morgan do *execute* here." The Rev. Mr. Fisher, however, both occupies and *executes* at Uphill; his age I can't say, but it might be more than six or seven-and-thirty, so that if there be defects or faults, they cannot arise from old age or physical inactivity; indeed, I could not have a more conclusive specimen of his energy, than the despatch with which he got through the service, and which for speed I could only compare to the pace of a special train through the cutting close by.

By my chronometer, as I went in, it wanted twenty minutes of eleven; I looked at my chronometer as I came out, and it was yet three quarters of an hour from noon. Now I am no advocate for long services and sermons, for when there is anything excessive in this way, the good is not unfrequently neutralized by the impatience of those who are expected to receive it. I don't know anything that ought to be more unpleasant, but at the same time more admonitory, to a clergyman in the pulpit, than to hear the jingle of seals and chains when he comes to his

"Sixthly, my hearers," or to catch a glimpse of innumerable watches slipping out of innumerable fobs when on the eve of another digression before "finally concluding;" but there's reason in everything, unless perhaps in a service got through in five-and-thirty or forty minutes, which certainly cannot boast of too much reason or precedent either. The whole seemed to be a "bunch of negatives;" I could not find fault with the sermon, for this best reason, there was not one; to the quality of the singing I have no objection to urge, for it was wholly omitted; with the conduct of the children I have no fault to find, for there were no children there; of want of room I cannot complain, for there were little but empty benches about me. We got through the Morning Prayers without a pause; we galloped through the Litany; we left the Collects and Gospel behind us in an inconceivably short time; we flew through the Commandments and the Communion; prayed expertly for the Church Militant, heard the blessing, took up our hats, and were off, and I half-way on my road to Weston, before I could believe I had been at Church at all. Even the donkey that drew my chair looked round roguishly with a thistle in the corner of his mouth, as much as to say, "Well, you have made short work of it;" 'twas no wonder then I thought of Balaam, and waited for my patient quadruped to commence the conversation.

St. Peter was a Fisher, but the converse will not be asserted of the Incumbent of Uphill, for he who toiled on the sea of Tiberias, preached often and long; whereas, the object of my present remarks does not appear to be very much disposed to keep himself or his congregation over time in Church.

By my side sat a portly and responsible looking gentleman, whose figure is familiar to me as having been seen, more than once, recumbent under the frondent boughs that on stated days overshadow the Churchwarden's pew of St. Philip and Jacob, in the ancient city of Bristol, and who on this occasion repeated the responses so loud and sonorous as to throw a clerk into quite a fit of official

jealousy. Well, this gentleman, as he brushed the crown of his hat, and drew on his dog-skin gloves, preparatory to starting, leant across, and in a confidential tone said to me, "I do assure you, Sir, I have not been at so cold and quick a service before."

"But the parson went fast enough to warm himself and us, Sir," said I. "He ought not to be ineffectual on the principle, *Urit enim fulgore suo.* You understand Latin, I suppose, Sir."

The ex-Churchwarden of St. Philip and Jacob pulled up his shirt collar, and said something about dining at two.

But it was not for the impression this morning service might have made on my *ex-officio* friend that I cared so much; he was a Churchman, and knew enough of the Church to know that this should not be taken as a specimen of the manner in which it is usually served. But behind me, on the next seat, sat a respectable Dissenter of Bristol, with his family; they had come out from Weston for the purpose of hearing, and possibly for the first time, the Divine Service of our boasted English Church. Curiosity, I have little doubt, had something to do with the visit; for there are places of sectarian worship in Weston; and even next door to Uphill Church is a little conventicle, into which I peeped before service, which was occupied by a few children, four or five grown people, and a solemn, silent, melancholy-looking man in black, who, seated inside a rail, seemed, or affected, to be engrossed with awful thoughts. It could not have been, therefore, for want of a Dissenting chapel that the party in question, and his family, took a long walk to Uphill Church. What, then, must have been the idea that this cold and rapid and apparently indifferent service induced them to form of the nature of the public worship of the Establishment? I am quite satisfied that it is impossible for any well-informed and clear-minded *Nonconformist*, to hear our beautiful Liturgy and witness the order of our holy services, as they ought to be celebrated, without feeling their solemn and surpassing superiority over the irregular, uncertain, and often incoherent, prayers of a

single man, by whose extemporaneous and crude and fallible effusions a whole congregation, if I may use the expression, are bound. Now, however I felt, I had no reason, humanly speaking, to glory in the effect which this, perhaps his first visit to a Church, had had upon my neighbour. It seemed cold without severity, bare without simplicity, the liturgy run through, no singing to the praise and glory of God, the Communion hurrying on after the Litany, and no distinction between both, beyond what was conveyed by the rapid descent of the clergyman from the reading-desk to the altar. *No sermon either.*

With regard to this last, it is only fair to say that it was Sacrament Sunday, an excuse with some clergymen, I believe, for the omission; but I maintain it is at best but an *excuse*, for if there is a day when a sermon ought to be more necessary in point of fact, or solemn in import, it is on such an one as this. Even those who have omitted it have always pleaded a want of time, and the number of communicants, and the urgency of other services. These reasons, however, could not be alleged in the present instance; the hour at which we were dismissed, some five-and-thirty or forty minutes after our entrance, proved there was ample time for a sermon, though there were a Church full of communicants, but on looking back I saw only three or four; and even if there was afternoon service at the old Church, (say at three o'clock,) there would still, in any case, be more than two hours to spare. I do not quote the adage, "where there is a will there's a way," for I will plainly state that had the Incumbent of Uphill been anxious to preach on Sunday last, there was nothing, in point of time, to prevent him.

"What, is there no sermon, Sir?" said my Nonconformist neighbour, as he handed me the Prayer Book which I lent him.

"It seems not," said I, somewhat abashed, and getting out of the reach of further question as quickly as I could. "What will that man say," thought I; "what will be the conversation of the family around their Sunday dinner

table, on their return to Weston?" I can hardly blame them, (nor perhaps is it any fancy picture after all that I draw,) for, shrugging their shoulders, and saying it was a cold, cheerless, uncomforting service, and that it was not worth their while walking so far, for so short and spiritless a half-hour of prayer. The youngest of them, recollecting the loud singings and sounding sermons they had been accustomed to, might have contrasted them with the chill service they had just heard, and unfavourably to the latter. My Nonconformist neighbour, as he carved the roast beef, and helped the horse raddish round, that day, may have muttered "Dry bones!" "Dumb dogs!" "Profitless—sapless!" and other terms equally significant of the impression which his (probably) first visit to the interior of a Church had made on him. Delighted as I am on most occasions to see a Dissenter enter a Church, at the Sabbath's holy hour of service, because I am convinced, (whether he confess it or not,) that the comprehensive beauty and piety of our Liturgy must strike him: I was, nevertheless, sorry to see the gentleman in question come in with his family on the present occasion; though perhaps I am wrong, for it is Heaven and not man that has achieved the triumphs, and built up the glory of the Church.

But a casual dissenting visitor is not all that has to be considered in the matter. I wish he were. If the last is to be taken as a specimen of the majority of Sundays at Uphill, how often must the poor man be sent home, without a word of human counsel, to his cottage on a Sabbath afternoon! There are few who strive to appreciate more highly than I do the beautiful prayers and ritual of our beloved Church, or are less disposed to overrate a sermon than I am. Still I will not have the latter run down; there is often edification, and always interest in it, especially to the poor unaccustomed to books; for the man who reads little, I think, often listens best; and it is astonishing how much of a sermon, how much of what "the parson says," even the agricultural labourer carries back to his home and hearth, and the bosom of his family; with him, how often, over the large dish of herbs, and the scanty

one of bacon, reference is made to the discourse of the day, much more (I know it for a fact) than many of us are aware of; it furnishes food, *pabulum* as the learned call it, for their simple apprehensions. If the cottager stays at home the long afternoon, and does not go to the beer house, he must have something to talk of and about to his family. "Nature abhors a vacuum," is a dictum of natural philosophy; it is equally true in a moral sense, the poor people must converse about something, and far better that the sermon, however indifferent, always suggestive of good, should furnish the topic of conversation.

And what grounds for cottage colloquy did Mr. Fisher furnish on Sunday last? Follow the simple people home to their rustic dwellings, watch Hodge throw off his hat, and "missus" untie her bonnet, and see if either or both don't say, "Well, the passon did not distress himself today;" or, "there is no danger of our bit o' bacon being over done." Or if they meet in the evening some one from a neighbouring Church, and hear of a good sermon and good singing, they are sure to make comparisons, and wish their "parson" would do the same.

And I cannot see why their parson should not; for he is fairly paid, and fairly housed. Oh, if there be a little parsonage, suggesting comfort and ease, aye, and happiness too, it is that sweet, picturesque, little thatched one at Uphill, which nestles close by the new Church, with its front red with roses, and redolent with jessamine, so as to "scent the air" for the traveller as he passes by under the neat trimmed hedge that skirts the road; oh, if there be any prettier little apartment than another, it is that little drawing room fronting the lawn, and with its long windows opening down on the turf, smooth as velvet, and studded with flowers. Parson Fisher, parson Fisher, yours is the sweetest room in the world to make a sermon in, if you would only determine to set about it. You would have the linnet and the bold thrush coming down from the old elms hard by to look at you, and the bees humming round the large cabbage roses and lulling you to reflection. Even I, that am a layman, could write a

sermon there; and were I Incumbent of Uphill, (how often have I wished my worthy father had made me a parson,) the people should never go without twenty minutes of my best advice. Even as it is, if you will not go to the trouble of writing them, I shall be most happy to purchase you a lot, or even to borrow out of my good friend the Rev. John Hall's abundance, sooner than that the people should be so shortly and summarily dismissed as on Sunday last.*

Uphill has on one side Weston, and on another Bleadon; the latter the favoured parish of the Rev. David Williams.

* Tupper, a good Churchman, in his *Crock of Gold*, has the following excuse for simple people turning Dissenters, which the situations of some parishes partially suggest:—"Susan was a Wesleyan Methodist, many may think, more the pity; but she neither disliked Church, nor called it Steeple House; only, forasmuch, as Hagglesfield was blest with a sporting parson, the chief reminders of whose presence in the parish, were strifes perpetual about dues and tithes, it is little blame or wonder if the starving sheep went any whither else for pasturage and water."

Stone, Gloucestershire.

Before the age of railroads Stone was familiar to every one who measured the distance between Gloucester and Bristol: now it is out of the way, and almost out of the world, unless to ancient fellows who, like myself, sometimes take the trouble of finding out an old friend.

I recollect it well; and if its worthy inhabitants do not regret the neat four-horse coaches that used formerly to roll by—a dozen of them in the day—I for one confess I never now make a journey to the neighbouring city without missing, amongst other objects on the road, the simple hamlet of Stone, with its pretty and venerable Church, and the rose-covered cottage close by, where my cousins and acquaintances, the Miss Wolverstones, resided. Even the wooden shovel on the cowel of my old friend Tom Bromedge's malthouse was as familiar to me as the vane of St. Nicholas Church, and only less welcome than the sight of its worthy owner, as he stood, with his greyhound by his side, plump in the centre of his broad porch, and curiously scanned "the outsiders," to see if there was ever an acquaintance amongst them; while I well knew the brown stone jug and the home brew that awaited my first recognition, in the front parlour, and

"With tempting aspect drew me from my road."

The last few years have done little to alter the appearance of the place, save that the strips of grass on either side of the untravelled road have approached somewhat nearer to each other, and the roses in front of Miss Wolverstones' cottage have departed with their mistresses; in other respects, neither the troubled affairs of the River Plate, nor the blockade of Buenos Ayres, seem to have affected the village or villagers of Stone.

It is about four miles south of Thornbury: and on the way you pass—at least I did—the dissenting house, graced by the presence, and maintained from the purse of Earl Ducie and his Countess. The Church was not good enough for his lordship, so he transferred his piety and his patronage to schism; and now, I suppose, shares its independent pulpit with the village shoemaker on alternate Sundays. The people were going in at the time I rode by; and, judging from their numbers, one would fancy the noble "supply" secured the attendance of his tenants by a covenant in their leases.

As I was full a quarter of an hour before my time, I loitered about the Church, churchyard, &c. until I was warned of the approach of the parson by hearing a group of people by the gateway say, "Here's the Doctor;" and on he came rumbling up the Rockhampton-road behind the old black horse, with the cook by his side in the phaeton, and the housemaid with the butler on the box; for the Doctor likes to see his household at Church, and to save the long walk always takes them with him.

Poor old man; I have a great respect for him, but could not help wishing as he descended with difficulty from his carriage and tottered across the churchyard to the porch, that he had not devolved his duties on younger shoulders ten years ago, and retired to his easy chair, in the rectory of Rockhampton: for a man over four score years, and even feeble for his age, can hardly be the person to serve two Churches; for he has, as I have already observed, the living of Rockhampton as well as the perpetual curacy of Stone, and both duties he endeavours to discharge without any permanent or, I believe, occasional aid, the effect of which is that for thirty-five years the parishioners of Stone have had only one service on Sunday—alternately morning and afternoon, the latter being the case on the occasion of my visit. Under any circumstances this ought not to be: it is, however, doubly to be regretted in a place like this, where the people are better disposed and attached to the Church than, I think, any other parish I have ever been in. It does not contain a

single dissenting chapel, and you should see the congregation which crowded—actually *crowded* the Church—not what you'd call a fair attendance, but a very full one—every pew occupied, and that by a class of people who form the "staff and staple" of an English rural population. In all this part of Gloucestershire, and along the banks of the Severn, I think the people retain their plain primitive heartiness and hospitality of manner more than elsewhere: the yeomen are of the heart of oak school, and the farmers and the farmers' families have not been yet refined out of their station. I have lived long enough to see a great change in this class in other parts of the country. I can recollect when their wives and daughters, healthy and kindly, did the main work of the dairy; and if you wanted "Miss" or "Missus" on a week day, the most likely place to look for and find them was over the cheese vat: now their labours are deputed; the daughters are dispersed to boarding schools, and madam has caught the modern notion that the general should use the head and not the hands. I was remarking to an old farmer that Double Glo'sters did not seem as rich now as they used to be, and he said, "No, we had new fangled machines instead of fingers to break the curd, and our servants, and not our wives and daughters, were the manufacturers." I am happy to say, however, that in this district the piano has not displaced the cheese-press; and the people are hearty and hale and natural, and worthy of their station. It is such who make good members of Church and State: they don't, indeed, trouble themselves about ethical or religious subtleties; their devotion to both is more a wholesome habit of mind than the result of reasoning. Longer and more learned heads, they believe, have already settled the argument and the evidence; it is enough for them that the sentiment accords with their own kindly dispositions, and encourages a love of those objects which they themselves regard with affection and veneration.

Of these the congregation of Stone Church was composed: no finery and no poverty—comfortable and contented; they knew nothing of poplins or rags, and were

besides as reverential and attentive an assembly as you could see.

I followed the Doctor into the Church, and saw him robe, or rather robed, in the reading desk. I marched straightforward to the largest pew I saw, which was one immediately under the organ loft, to the manifest surprise of most present, who are evidently unused to strangers. Even Squire Cox looked at me as though I were a Hydra with a hundred heads, or a man without one.

It cuts me to the heart to be even candid with a clergyman of Dr. Davis's years; but it is still more painful to see him persist in rejecting help, and keeping on the harness long after his powers of work have disappeared. We cannot conceive a man able to discharge the more active duties of a parish minister, who has hardly the physical strength to falter through the service: his voice was low and feeble—the motion of his head made it tremulous; and, though he had frequent recourse to cold water, he could with difficulty get through his work. Age, I know, is honourable, nor could an old man die in a holier service than that of the Church; but there are others to be considered besides the individual himself; and however gently we may be disposed to speak of the failings of fourscore years, we can hardly endure with patience the obstinacy of an octogenarian who continues to hold in his trembling hands the undivided possession of two parishes so populous. Even the indulgence to age must be second to the interests of religion; and when one sees people so well disposed to the Church, and crowding in such numbers as they did on Sunday last within the sacred porch, we feel they are worthy of an active resident pastor, and those opportunities of public worship which other places possess; for I am convinced that parishioners, who avail themselves with such alacrity of one service on Sunday, would cheerfully embrace the privileges afforded by two. Indeed they say so much themselves. "Is it not a pity, Sir," observed a man as we left the Church, and the departing congregation overspread the road on all sides, "that such good Church people cannot have a second

service on Sundays?" And it is a pity, and a great pity; in these days of dissent and disaffection, political and religious, it is seldom you see a parish as a whole so devoted to the Establishment, so attached to its ordinances, and when you do, it is worth while, at least, to do them justice; and yet, though Dr. Davis has been thirty-two years (I can recollect him for over twenty myself) Perpetual Curate of Stone, and Incumbent of the neighbouring parish, the former (and perhaps the latter, for all I know to the contrary,) is to this day without a school, and has never, as I have already observed, had more than one weekly service. No means, however limited, no family, however long, would justify so cheap and sparing a way of "working two Churches." But Dr. Davis has no excuse on this head; a man of large fortune, he is just the person to whom two or three of the active clergymen, who are being daily ordained to the service of the Church, should look for employment. There is a period at which "tired nature" requires rest, in all professions and callings of life; and if, instead of taxing his strength and his old black horse driving between two parishes on a Sunday, he let younger heads and stronger hands attend to both, Doctor Davis would only be doing justice to himself and those committed to his charge. I know even an octogenarian does not wish to feel himself a cypher in the world; he might still, however, employ himself with profit as a country gentleman and a country justice, when he might occupy his time with pleasure to himself, or rest without prejudice to others. The apples would still grow at Rockhampton, though he were in his easy chair, with slippered feet on the dining-room fender; and poachers would still be punished at Berkeley, though he were absent from the bench; but far different are the care and concerns of the souls of two extensive parishes. They are a wide field for good or for evil; and on such broad grounds, an old man of eighty can hardly be deemed, unassisted and alone, a match for so active an individual as the Devil.

Of the kindness of the worthy Doctor's heart I have no

doubt; but it is not for his own heart alone the clergyman has to answer; it is also for the hearts of those who have been left with but a scanty supply of religious service, for people without a resident pastor, and children without schools. It would be a pleasure to an active clergyman to have such a parish to attend to, no indifferent or disaffected flock, but a congregation who evidently love the Church, and heartily enter into its ordinances. As a proof of this, I have but to instance the large number and neatness of the attendants, and the decorum, and even decent and meritorious pride, with which the service was performed. The organ was played by a village artizan (named Stinchcombe,) who is the proprietor of the instrument itself, and the *Nunc dimittis, Jubilate,* &c., were effectively chaunted by the rustic choir. The psalm was particularly well sung, far better than I have heard it in many city Churches; there were two or three excellent voices amongst them, but one in particular, a legitimate counter-tenor, was really beautiful. I could wish, however, that the people generally had joined more heartily in the responses; but the fault I have found it necessary to find with the Doctor in the reading-desk, arose from the failings of age, and not from carelessness or indifference.

Owing to the distance, I did not take my large Prayer Book with me, so I was fain to apply to that nearest my hand in the pew, and which turned out to be an old red-lined half rubricated one of 1738. On the blank leaf, (for I looked at it whilst the Doctor was shifting his spectacles and his gown, as, strange to say, he has a different pair of the former to read his sermon and the service in.) Well, on the blank leaf of this old Prayer Book, I read the name "Eleanor Bennett, Feb. 10, 1741," and underneath a memorandum of the text preached on some Sunday in the same year, possibly the same day. It might have been an eloquent discourse, but how far more eloquently and impressively did that simple memorial preach to us, from that whitey brown leaf in that old Prayer Book. It may have been, it most likely was, delivered to a Church quite as full, and a congregation

quite as crowded as the present, yet of him who preached, and those who heard that same discourse, from Kings, a century ago, not one now remained. The subjects with which the finite reason of the preacher may have then feebly but laboriously struggled, and the dim apprehensions of the hearers vainly endeavoured to take in, have long since been more than illustrated to him who preached and those who heard, by the full effulgency of a boundless intelligence. Outside us, under the greed sod, beneath the little earth mounds that surround the sacred walls, slept the audience, and perhaps the author of the sermon of 1741—meeting in spirit above, mingling in dust below. Just shut your eyes for a moment, and fancy yourself in the Church, a hundred years ago, listening to this very same discourse from Kings, amongst the congregation who then occupied these seats, and retrospect will possibly prompt the same reflections, that in another century some such simple memorial of us will suggest to a race sitting in the pews where now we sit. Ah, Eleanor Bennett, whoever you may have been, little you dreamt, when you dotted down this text, on some bright spring Sunday, perhaps in 1741, that in 1845 it should meet the eye of a wandering stranger, and preach over again, even in its silent record, so solemn a lesson.

I confess, for a time, it supplanted even the Doctor's discourse in my mind, and set me thinking on the actual and inevitable reality of death, while he was preaching against the ambition of life. 'Twould be a capital sermon, would the Doctor's, preached at St. James's, or in the Royal Chapel of Windsor, for it was all against the vanity of courts, and the intoxication of earthly glory; but considering that the parishioners of Stone are not likely to be tempted with many brilliant offers of earthly advancement, I could not help thinking the best part of the sermon was as good as thrown away, unless it can be proved that the village lawyer has had secret repinings for a place on the woolsack, or that some ambitious politician then present, had an envious and expectant eye on the Premier's post. For my part, I long since resolved,

should her Majesty offer me the Buck Hounds, or the Queen's Bench, to refuse them both. I could only account for the sermon, (which was a very old one, as the paper looked dingy indeed,) by fancying it may have been written to console the Earl Fitzharding "in a period of deep despondency," as the poets say, and when suffering from some state disappointment.

But this old "pew waif" was a curious prayer book, and if one of its blank pages possessed

"Much that might give me pause, when pondered fittingly;"

another contained materials for far different reflections, in the shape of a parody, I suppose, on one of the Psalms. Some of the older inhabitants of Stone cannot, I expect, be unacquainted with this profane composition, and if I be not very much mistaken, I have some recollection myself of the graceless freak to which it refers. The words were:—

"And now how are my foes increased,
They vex me more and more;
They took away the chain and post
That stood before my door."

Many years ago, (I am afraid to say how many,) old parson Carrington, the inventor of the "Life Pills," and Incumbent of Berkeley, who was the object of more than one practical joke, had these articles, the chain and post, which stood in front of his residence, taken away by some midnight *gentlemanly* marauders, who, not content with the act, surreptitiously placed the foregoing verses, on the following Sunday, in the Common Prayer and Proper Lessons for the day, also copying it into some books that were in the pews, and as mine had been nearly a hundred years, perhaps, in the same seat, it became the innocent instrument of perpetuating a now almost forgotten but wicked freak. I am afraid in those days the Hundred of Berkeley was rather noted for bold and boisterous roisterers.

The outside of the edifice, which is the best, has all the character of a pretty and venerable village Church; it is in good repair, and, as well as the old churchyard, neatly and properly kept and attended to. The main body of the building is of the Decorated Gothic, though some parts of the tower is Perpendicular; the latter is good and symmetrical, and would be better if it were surmounted by a loftier spire, the present being poor and short in proportion. It has a neat south porch, and I thought its appearance enhanced by the numbers of hearty wholesome-looking yeomen, and their comely families, which it poured forth after service. I saw by an inscription in front of the organ loft, that the structure was repaired in 1750, or thereabouts, when I suppose the parish authorities spoiled a simple and subdued interior by an inappropriate plaister ceiling and light washed walls. The same inscription recites that the gallery was rebuilt or renewed "by the singers"—a characteristic record, which shows that the interest the people of Stone take in their Church is of no recent date. The feelings and sentiments of the parish have, indeed, for many many years, been warmly in favour of their Church, and even the want of a school and second service, and the sedulous and incessant endeavours of Earl Ducie, cannot provoke or tempt them to consent to the introduction of schism.

When I mention a good ancient font, and a few rude but ancient tombstones in the aisle, I believe I have recounted every thing worth mentioning, in an architectural point of view, about the building.

Doctor Davis had no bands on, and I don't think I ever saw him wear any. Whether this omission arose from forgetfulness, or the want of a supply, I cannot say; I should think it was from the latter cause, only that I have seen some curious instances of the former. In his own Churches he is in the habit of robing in the reading desk, and as I have observed changing his spectacles there also; but once when he went to preach at Thornbury, I recollect, he went into the vestry-room, obviously for the purpose of shifting his surplice for his gown, but he

walked out again without it, and up into the pulpit, and had got half way through his sermon, simply in a black coat, when raising his hand to his shoulder, he discovered the omission, and immediately returned to the vestry-room, and supplied the deficiency.

Somebody, (could it have been my old friend Bromedge?) I felt convinced must have identified me, during the time I waited for prayers on the green before the Church, for during the singing after service the Doctor eyed me very hard from the pulpit. Indeed, he informed Mrs. ——, coming out of Church, that he heard just before entering that I was there. He was sorry, too, he said, that he had not known it earlier, as he should have brought a different sermon; so that I may have barely escaped a denunciation by a hair's breadth.

The Church of Stone is dedicated to All Saints, and contains one or two chauntries. The next presentation of Rockhampton has been repeatedly bought within the last few years, and as often sold again by its impatient purchasers. One of the buyers at one time fancied he was so near possession, that he obtained permission to replant the orchard, with the prospective intention of eating the apples at no distant day; but the Doctor has made many a good hogshead of cider out of them since, thus adding a new comment on the old line in the Eclogue,

"Insere, Daphne, pyros; carpent tua poma nepotes."

Having seen the Doctor depart amongst the salutations of his flock, and followed him with an almost audible wish that he would get a Curate and establish a school, I prepared to turn my face towards Thornbury.*

* The worthy old Doctor has since died. His monument may be seen in Rockhampton Church. It was erected by himself in his own time, and the complimentary inscription written with his own hand. The executors, on his death, had therefore but to remove the boarding which previously concealed it, and there, ready cut, was the Rector's tablet.

Pensford.

THERE is no man, woman, or child, who for the last forty years has been born within the sound of St. Mary Redcliff bells, who has not heard the story of the Somersetshire rustic of this ilk, who, when compelled by a subpœna, or some family affair, to undertake a journey to London, (when journeys to London occupied as many days as they do hours now, and when Bristol men made their wills before they turned their horses' heads towards Bath,) on arriving back in his own village, drew a long breath of gratification and gratitude, and in the fulness of his heart exclaimed, "Well, Lunnun be mighty fine, and the people be terrible thick there, but of all the places ever I zeed, gee I Pensford." The visitor, who transitorily finds himself in a village of small and decayed houses, would, if he restricted his view to the immediate scene, wonder where Hodge saw the attraction that induced him to prefer his own to every other place. But leaving the mysterious influence of home altogether out of the question, there are few villages in Somersetshire (rich as it is in rich scenery) that surpass Pensford in situation. As I looked down upon its fine vale from Hussly Hill, with Publow peeping out from its old elms on the left, and the teeming luxuriance of the landscape clothed on all sides with fine timber, I saw how the simple villager, whose birthplace was situated amid so much natural beauty, and who looked out upon it from his own threshold every day, could feel a refreshing relief in finding himself once more amongst faces and objects friendly and familiar to him.

The day itself was eminently calculated to add to the inward enjoyment of outward objects. The new mown hay, as it lay strewn in the field where it yesterday flourished, sent forth its fragrance, "as spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof," and the eglantine fairly loaded

the air with perfume, while the quiet little Forget-Me-Not looked out from the hedgerows on either side, with that pensive blue eye which so happily harmonizes with the poetic associations of its pretty name. It is not the head, but the heart, that in such moments suggests the beautiful recollections of Scripture, which flow as it were insensibly from the memory, for to no effort of thought can I attribute the passage that then rose to my mind, from the Song of Solomon; "For lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land, the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with their tender grapes give a good smell."

There is a little inn or hostelry at Pensford, the name whereof I forget, if it be not the Crown, but it faces the little Round (or Blind) House of the village; here after many unbarrings of a great gate I got admission for John, and having commended him to the care of a rough looking rustic, I strolled out to see the "wonders that do renown" the place. Pensford's only topographer describes it as being "pleasantly situated in a fine woody vale, almost surrounded with small hills, well cultivated, and having on their sides several hanging orchards, which form a pleasing rural scene from every part of the town;" and he is correct enough, for as I sat on the battlement of the new bridge that spans the scanty river Chew, I found my view bounded on every hand just as he has described. At most of the houses near me the children were being dressed in their Sunday clothes, and for the fuller benefit of light and air, their simple toilet was for the greater part being performed on the threshold; a primitive condition of things, which was still farther illustrated by now and again some little frolicksome curly-headed young rogue starting off from his mother, and as he took a career through the highway in his buff, looking like a Pensford Cupid who had lost his wings. There were some children who loitered by me, and upon whom the same trouble of ablution did not appear to have been bestowed. I asked

them if they went to school, and they said they did "to the chapel;" I inquired if they were taught to wash their faces at chapel, and they said they were not, a fact obvious in itself. There appears to be a good deal of dissent around; at one period I should think the parish must have been greatly neglected, and schism allowed to spring up and take root almost deep enough to defy future eradication.

As I still had some time to spare before service, and nothing more to see from my seat on the bridge, I took it into my head to pay a visit to my old friend Rogers, and see how his roses were getting on. Many years ago, when I was a more energetic gardener than I can pretend to be now, I particularly prided myself (though I won no gravy spoons or punch ladles) on my roses; and then I often walked over of an evening and made a purchase at Pensford nursery, and walked back again with my plant.

Rogers had not forgotten me; he was dressed for Church in his blue coat and brass buttons, and buff waistcoat, and drab smalls and continuations, with a tuft of Banxias in his button hole. I found him walking about his garden with his budding knife, more really from the effect of habit than for use, in his hand, though he very soon employed it to cut me a Prince Albert, which, as well as every other kind, grows in extraordinary health and luxuriance there. I could not help thinking that a walk in that garden, where the wonders of God are so beautifully displayed, was no bad preparation for Church. "I look upon the pleasure which we take in a garden," says Addison, "as one of the most innocent delights in human life. A garden was the habitation of our first parents before their fall. It is naturally apt to fill the mind with calmness and tranquillity, and to lay all its turbulent passions at rest. It gives us a great insight into the contrivances and wisdom of Providence, and suggests innumerable subjects of meditation. I cannot but think the very complacency and satisfaction which a man takes in these works of nature, to be a laudable if not a virtuous habit of mind." I have sometimes walked through the

fields with my old esteemed and lamented friend, Leonard Knapp, when he was writing his book on British Grasses, and seen him look for minutes together, with deepest interest, on a sprig of sangfoin or a blade of clover: how much more then must these flowers, which are arrayed superior to Solomon, when he was robed in all the glory of Tyrian purple, excite our admiration and wonder. Some one has said, that for their comparative numbers, there have been fewer criminals amongst gardeners than amongst any other class; and for my part I wonder how one whose labour is the life-long day amongst such innocent and beautiful creatures, with the linnet and the thrush singing from the fruit trees around, could be a great malefactor. Some wise men find it hard to account for what they call the mania of flower fanciers and flower growers, but their mania is no mystery to me; if I could give my name to a single flower, it would be immortality enough for me, as Peter Collinson thought it sufficient reward for all his botanical labours, when Linæus baptized a plant with his patronymic; and Sir Anthony Ashley, who introduced into this country one of its most useful vegetables, only seemed to have the words of Swift prophetically in mind when he had a cabbage sculptured on the monumental marble that perpetuates his fame.

On returning to the village, I walked into the churchyard, which, unless when the large iron gate is open, is inaccessible. On one side it is bounded by a little mill stream, and rather confined by small and poor looking houses; it is, however, cleanly kept; it was for the most part covered by rich grass, which was allowed to grow up rather too luxuriantly, but by the pathway near the porch were three or four seemingly infants' graves, which were "turned into prettiness" by being planted with pinks and other flowers, that appeared to thrive as healthily on their "mortal beds," as if under the fostering care of my friend Rogers. There are people who would amuse themselves with a poetic train of conjectures on such an incident; to me it was enough to know that some young mothers, perhaps, or elder sisters had adopted this innocent and

pleasing plan of depriving the infants' graves of all their terrors.

Seated at his ease on the bier beneath the tower, the old clerk, sexton, or grave digger, (for he did the duties of all three,) was pulling lazily at the bell rope when I entered the Church, which was as yet quite empty. I got into conversation with him, though at first he was far from disposed to be communicative. I learnt, however, that the Rector was the Rev. Mr. Philott, who did not reside in the parish, and the Curate's name was Tilley, who did. Before I had finished my interview, I heard the pat-pat-pat of innumerable little feet approaching through the churchyard, and in another moment the head of a column of little girls (I speak in military phrase) made its appearance through the porch, and filed by me to the gallery in two and two. They were, to the number of forty, neatly and uniformly dressed in frocks, bonnets, and pelerines, and looked clean and in good health. The mistress followed in the rear, and to her I addressed myself for information; she seemed a respectable and intelligent woman, and her observations were characterised by good sense. From her I learnt that the school was not a national school; it was founded by a General Owen, (now dead,) for forty children, to be taught and clothed. The Misses Ford, of Clifton, the nieces I think of the General, have the control and superintendence of it, and kindly supply any deficiency in the funds required for its support; for their gallant relative's intentions were rather disproportioned to his bequest. As there may possibly be several Misses Ford at Clifton, and I do not want the credit of this action to find its way to the wrong quarter, I think it well to mention that my informant said the Misses Ford of Harley Place.

There is not, I believe, any other school there, connected with the Church, a sore privation, considering there are boys as well as girls to be educated. I do not know, and I forgot to enquire, if the Rector ever tried to get up one; but if he did, I dare say he found the apathy of the great landed proprietors of the place immovable. General Popham, or

General Popham's heir, (for I rather think the "old soldier" has been some time soldered up in lead in the family vault) has some ten or twelve thousand a year in the neighbourhood; out of this, perhaps, he may have given a guinea, at one time or another, in so called charity; but I believe twenty-one shillings are the utmost obligation the parish is under to his illustrious house. I often wonder where half the rich people expect to go when they die, they seem to be so perfectly insensible to every thing like their duty. If it were not for the exertions made by the middle classes to relieve want, the possessions of the unfeeling great would have been long since perilled by the impatience of despair and poverty. Seven-eighths of the good done, is done, not by the lofty of the land, whose givings are too often miserably disproportioned to their means, but by the quiet and unpretending, upon whom the burden mainly falls. Here, for instance, are two or three parishes overrun by ignorance and dissent, and the clergymen, instead of receiving support from the legitimate quarter, to which they ought to look for it, do not, I am informed, even receive an answer to their applications.

While I was still engaged in conversation with the school mistress, the congregation (and I was sorry to see a small one) had arrived. The Curate soon after entered, and put on his surplice under cover of a high pew. The late Bishop Jebb, in his observations on clerical dress, says—"In country Churches it is too frequently the case that the clergyman walks up the aisle in spattered boots, and puts on his clerical dress in the reading-desk before the people. No plan for a new Church shall have my approbation, which does not include a vestry. These Churches, which at present want this accommodation, should with all convenient speed be provided with it. And in the interim the porch, rather than the desk, should be used for the purpose of robing." There were no spattered boots in this case, and no censure whatsoever to be applied to the clergyman, for he did all that he could to robe himself as much as possible out of sight of the

congregation. Still it detracts from the solemnity of the clerical office to see a man walk up the aisle in his ordinary clothes, and getting into a corner of the Church, appear the next moment in his canonicals. It is much more in accordance with the impressive and reverential character of the priesthood, to see the clergyman come forth from his vestry already prepared in "surplice snowy white" for his sacred duty.

The tower of Pensford is old, but the other parts of the edifice are poor and modern. It consists of a nave and south aisle, lit by plain, round-headed Roman windows; and the interior, though clean, is cold and naked; the altar is a miserable piece of wood work, and the altar cloth is cotton velvet, once crimson, but now faded down to a dirty white. Still there has evidently been some attempt at what they call "doing up the Church," of late, for the pulpit presents the most singular appearance I ever beheld; the ground work is white, picked out, and ambitiously ornamented with Prussian blue, and altogether it is more like a new china mug than anything else I can compare it to. Against the south wall is a King's Arms, with the initials G. III. R., and underneath the following inscription:—

"This Church was repaired and beautified, with this and other monuments, by the Feoffees of the Church-lands, at the expense of *that* Church, A. D. 1790. Geo. Ashton and Mirma Ashton, churchwardens."

It is left to conjecture whether the porcelain pulpit was part of the beautifying or not. Leaving, however, the King's English of the King's Arms out of the question, its ornamental effect may be fairly disputed.

On asking the clerk where I might sit, he intimated the whole Church was open to me to select from, but pointed to a large pew near the altar, and over which the flue of the stove horizontally impended, being held up by hardly a stronger security than Damocles' sword. Independently of the school girls, there could not have been much more than fifty persons present—a circumstance

at which I was surprised, for the service was well and reverentially performed, the children singing with simple but most sweet and effective melody. The sermon was a sound and most useful discourse, calculated for, and suited to, the hearers. During the reading of the Liturgy, a singular incident, or rather coincidence, occurred, which had quite a solemn effect. The morning had been intensely sultry, but during the Litany the sky became overcast, and a long peal of thunder, accompanied by a heavy fall of rain, rolled over the little Church and congregation; its echoes had hardly died away, when the clergyman in the usual sequence of the service repeated the words, "From lightning and tempest, good Lord deliver us;" an incident which showed the peculiar and beautiful adaptation of our incomparable liturgy, so sublime and comprehensive as it is, to every circumstance and situation of life. In some of the mountainous parts of Spain and Switzerland, where thunder storms are more frequent and more fearfully grand than in this country, we are told by travellers that it is the practice amongst the inhabitants, after one has occurred, to flock at once to their respective chapelries, at the mountain foot, and there offer up fervent prayers of gratitude for their merciful preservation, to Him who "has made darkness his secret place, and his pavilion round about Him dark waters and thick clouds of the skies."

On leaving the Church I thought it my duty to express to the schoolmistress the great satisfaction and pleasure with which I observed the conduct of the children during service, and the sweet and solemn manner in which they acquitted themselves in singing.

Having determined to attend afternoon service at Publow, I returned to mine inn, and had some refreshment. I asked an interesting looking little girl, the daughter of my hostess, and who attended me during my meal, the hour that prayers commenced at Publow.

"Three, Sir," said she, "*I* sing there."

"Oh, indeed," said I, "the Crown is then at the Publow side of the river Chew; but have you a choir there?"

"Oh yes, Sir, a bass viol, two flutes, and a clarionet, two basses, three tenors, myself, and two other young girls."

"Bless my soul," said I, "with such an orchestra you must be quite a lion in the country, have you a large congregation?"

"Yes, Sir, since we began to get up music, we are only six months at it, and we sing anthems."

"Then take away, child," said I, "and make haste and dress yourself, for I shall have the pleasure of hearing you this evening."

In less than half an hour I was on my way across the fields to Publow; for an account of which, good reader, you will have the kindness to wait until next week.

Publow.

The walk from Pensford to Publow, over the hill and though the fields, is so beautiful—presents such rich and varied landscapes on every side, that it almost bewilders one's admiration. As soon as I reached the eminence, from which I had a view of the old church and its old trees, and the little river Chew winding slowly and smoothly around it, I took my seat on the dry and elevated roots of a beech, and looking down on the landscape, "the watered vale," the grey tower, and the pointed porch half seen through the ancient yews, I repeated as correctly as I could—

"I love the ivy-mantled tower,
Rocked by the storms of thousand years;
The grave, whose melancholy flower
Was nourished by a martyr's tears.
I love the organ's joyous swell,
Sweet echo of the heavenly ode;
I love the cheerful village bell,
Faint emblem of the call of God.
Waked by the sound, I bend my feet,
I bid my swelling sorrows cease;
I do but touch the mercy-seat,
And hear the still small voice of peace.
Long be our Father's temple ours,
Woe to the hand by which it falls!
A thousand spirits watch its towers,
A cloud of angels guard its walls."

But really, though almost every English country Church is associated with some beauty or another to the mind or the eye of the spectator, I do not recollect when I have seen one that from the position where I then stood, taking of course the influence of a summer's afternoon into consideration, seemed so softly secluded: it was just the one, if I wished to give a foreigner an idea of that eminently

English picture, an English country Church, I should have pointed out to him, and left him for some minutes in silence to see, and to *feel*, and to contemplate the view.

Descending from the hill by a pathway through the meadows, and passing over a little rustic bridge, I took shelter from the sun under the patriarchal yews of the churchyard. Perceiving, however, that the doors were open, pilgrim-like I sat down and rested myself on the sedilia or stone seats within the south porch. Leaning my hands on my stick, and my head on my hands, whether it was the walk, or the refection at "the Crown," or the heat, or both, or all three, I cannot say, but I may have dozed and happily may have dreamt of holy men who ministered, and simple hearted people who worshipped a hundred years ago within those same walls, and on just such another summer Sabbath afternoon. Be this, however, as it may, if I did sleep I was awakened by a hollow musical sound, something like what Memnon's statue may be supposed to have sent forth, and on opening my eyes I saw a little man struggling under a big bass viol—doubtless the identical one appertaining to the choir of which the "Maid of the Inn" at Pensford had apprized me. The violinist, dragging his viol with him, having disappeared through some secret doorway or another, I proceeded, as the congregation had not yet arrived, to take a survey of the Church: and here let me say that when it may be securely done, without danger of desecration, it is desirable to leave God's house open during the Sabbath, for there is something soothing and solemn in a walk through its quiet and silent aisles at any period of the day.

Though it still wanted nearly half an hour of service time, the clerk (and he was the only person in the Church with myself,) was seated in the reading-desk, where, with his spectacles drawn up on his forehead, (for he had evidently been marking the lessons,) he was enjoying a siesta. He seemingly liked the refreshing coolness of the Church, and had, possibly, retired there for a quiet *contemplative* nap after dinner. While I meditated taking a sketch of

him as he slept, he awoke; and rubbing his eyes and descending from his resting-place, he civilly tendered me all the information I required, or rather all he possessed, about the Church.

There is nothing remarkable in the building, though the surrounding scene is perfectly beautiful, and the tower and the exterior have a venerable and pleasing appearance. It consists of a centre and two side aisles; and from the appearance of altar steps and piscina in the latter, I think All Saints, (for to them the edifice is dedicated,) possessed two or three chauntries. The appearance of the nave is greatly impaired by the insertion, in some comparatively recent alteration, of wretched modern clerestory windows. There are some niches outside, but the saints have disappeared. There are two good porches; and the window drips seem to have all terminated with finely executed corbel heads.

While I was taking my survey, the First and Second Flutes made their appearance, and were quickly followed by the Clarionet. As I am not of the Grand Sultan's mind, who thought the tuning the best part of the concert, I left the choir to their preliminary scratching and piping; and perching myself on an old altar tomb of some Publonian, departed this life a hundred years ago, I waited in the churchyard the approach of the clergyman and congregation. Here I was soon after joined by the First Flute, without his hat: he was a young rustic coxcomb, with his dark hair divided in front, and a remarkably good opinion of himself. Jumping up on the tomb and seating himself by my side, he entered at once into conversation with me; and on my inquiring as to the number of attendants, he gave me to understand, like my little friend at the inn, that the music was the main attraction. "Our parson had not six to hear him until we came," said he.

"Then you, and not the parson, are the *populous* man," said I; but First Flute opened his eyes, and did not understand the allusion.

I am always glad to see young men and women in the parish take the trouble of getting up, and take a pleasure

in, the musical services; for all this helps to give them an interest in, and attach them to their parish Church; and I sometimes think that the Dissenters often lead off the humbler classes by their constant hymning. But I was a little annoyed with First Flute for his conceit, and the manner in which he spoke of "our parson," as if inferior to the bass viol; so I left him and went into Church.

The clergyman was already in the reading-desk, and with him a fine little boy in a brown Holland dress, (his son), who appeared to me, as he stood up behind papa, to be counting the congregation. There was a good attendance, which I was very glad to see, and the pews were pretty full; that in which I sat, however, was a most ricketty one; for every time I sat down or stood up, it creaked around and beneath me like a young earthquake. The service was reverentially performed; and I was curious enough to look up in the gallery to see if my little handmaiden of the Crown at Pensford, who so pointedly informed me of the share she contributed towards the parish music, was in her place; and there she was, singing away with all her voice, and, I hope, her heart too.

As my face was at the moment turned towards the singers, I did not see the clergyman go into the pulpit; on turning round, however, I was somewhat surprised to see that his little son had ascended with him, and perching on the seat behind papa, made a small family group more singular than appropriate.

There is no one who admires paternal affection more than I do; and, though an old bachelor myself, there is no one who rejoices more to see it exhibited on all seasonable and proper opportunities and places; but I would have been quite as well pleased, if the reverend the Curate had left the child in the present case under the care of his nurse-maid, or one of the congregation, or even the clerk, rather than have taken him up into the pulpit, where an exhibition of the domestic virtues of the parent may only detract from the dignity of the Priest. So far as the act and intention went nothing could be more innocent, I am quite well aware, or perhaps even more amiable; the

primitive simplicity of a rural parish, too, may be some justification of an act which to a country audience may be nothing unusual: but *I* did not like to see the pulpit turned into a day nursery, and *clericulus* cooly swinging his little straw hat over one side, while *clericus* was preaching from the other.

The foreigner, who was accustomed to the celibacy of the Romish Priests, was surprised, and perhaps a little shocked, on seeing British Bishops surrounded by large families, and informed his countrymen on his return of what he fancied a scandalous phenomenon. "*Vidi episcopos,*" said he, "*et episcopas, episcopulos, et epistopulas,*" (I saw Bishops and Bishopesses, Bishoplings and Bishoplingesses,) and though I am no advocate of sacerdotal or any kind of celibacy, (though I am unfortunately an ancient member of the monastic brotherhood myself,) still I can understand how a foreigner, who was used to a single priesthood, a priesthood altogether devoted to the service of their Church, and set apart from family concerns and family interests and anxieties, must have thought it strange to see an ordained ministry divided between the cares of the Church and children—to see the academic gown and the matron's muslin side by side, and the hooded priest presiding over a household of nursery-maids and a string of daughters, with the music of Tancredi echoing in his ears, and the anxieties of butchers' meat bills urging themselves on his attention.

For my part, while on this subject I am free to confess that I have often thought we are too familiar with our clergy, and our clergy too familiar with us. I would discourage no friendly or spiritual confidence, but I would draw a line of demarcation, or marked distinction, between mere ordinary every-day men and those whose duties are sacred—who, as it were, serve between heaven and earth: such "divinity," in my opinion, should "hedge" the ordained minister of the Church, that he should be shielded from indifference and levity, and the layman feel on all occasions his own inferiority to one holding so high an office, even though a fellow mortal. I would have some

more distinct outward and visible sign of their calling than is conveyed by the white cravat; and when I meet a clergyman and exchange a passing common-place salutation with him, and hear from his lips the important intelligence that it is "catching weather for the hay," I sometimes regret that Martin Luther did not insert a clause in favour of the old-fashioned "*Benedicite.*" There are moments when I imagine that the clergymen themselves do not maintain their dignity, or perhaps I should say their distance, sufficiently in this respect, but by a certain indifference of dress and address impair the prestige which should attach to their sacred profession. For instance, the first rubrical injunction in the order for the Visitation of the Sick requires that

> "*When any person is sick, notice shall be given thereof to the Minister of the parish; who, coming into the sick person's house, shall say,*
>
> "'Peace be to this house, and to all that dwell in it.'"

Now nothing can be more solemn and beautiful than this sacred salutation under such circumstances. Yet many, very many clergymen of the Church of England, on crossing the threshold of a sick house, have no more impressive mode of accosting the inmates than by enquiring after James or Thomas, or an uncle or an aunt. This of course is not the case in the sick chamber, but when the Church has prescribed so appropriate and touching a greeting, the first words of the minister within the door posts of a house of affliction should not be those of common-place parlance. We are told how "beautiful are the feet" of such a messenger come on such an errand; and the sick house is often a more successful field of labour than the full Church.

The sermon (2 Peter i. 4.) was a useful, plain, and pious discourse. The whole service was performed by the Curate, the Rev. Mr. Cornwall. The Rev. — Daubeny is Rector, but he won't work; he lives at Cheltenham or Clifton—very convenient retreats for clergymen who were not born with a talent or taste for rural life. I believe the

advowson is for sale, as one of the parishioners with whom I had some conversation evidently left me with an impression that I was come over to look at it preparatory to a purchase.

A field or two from the Church I was overtaken by the Curate, who at once and very civilly accosted me. He drew my attention to the landscape, and seemed as ardent an admirer of the scene as I was. He complained that the brass company, by raising the water of the river, had made both the burial ground and the Church quite damp, which I certainly perceived on my entrance to the latter, though I did not then know the cause. He spoke with much good sense of the difficulties of a clergyman, destitute of local and lay aid, in a large parish, full of dissenters, and where schools and clothing, and other charities are so much required. He also alluded to a subject of which I have myself often thought. He had not, I think, been more than a year in the parish; and in the place where he had previously been he had a town congregation of nearly a thousand persons; rather a contrast certainly with a small rural, simple attendance such as I saw that evening; transitions, however, to which moveable Curates (I use the adjective to distinguish them from permanent) are liable. I noticed that he preached in his surplice, as in fact they all do in the country parts of Somerset; and he said, with a smile, that it was not the colour of the garment, but of the doctrine preached in it that to him was of importance; and I need hardly say I fully concurred with him. Indeed, on the whole I found him a very intelligent, cheerful person; and I have little doubt he makes a useful and active clergyman. On reaching the top of the hill our roads diverged, so we parted—he to his home, and I to my hostelry.

Wrington.

When I have rather a distant Church to visit, I leave Bristol somewhat earlier than usual, at about the time when the milkmen are making their morning peregrinations from door to door, and this very coincidence, on Sunday week, almost cost me a fall; for just on Redcliff Hill, some fellow, who must have been a novice at his calling, gave such a sudden shrill shout of "Meeulk!" and deposited his tin cans with such a clash on the flags, that John jumped in a panic at least three feet aside, and had it not been for the pummel and crupper I should have measured almost double that number on the ground. I like the cry of "Meeulk," whether it be made at the door or down the "airy," I have been so long accustomed to it. I like the calling, too, for those fellows in white smock frocks are so redolent of the country, they seem each morning, as they make their rounds through a crowded city, like refreshing envoys to us, from green fields and dairy farms; but I would not purchase even the picturesque at the expense of a fall, and I hope all the milkmen who subscribe to my friend's paper, and read this notice, will be kind enough to deposit their cans at peoples' doors, on Sundays, with as little noise as possible, if they don't wish to see me brought back to my lodgings some fine morning on a door.

I did not go direct to my destination; but wishing to have once more my old walk from Congresbury to Wrington by the river, I stabled John at the latter place, and proceeded along these pleasant green banks from which I have so often cast my May-fly.

I ought to be ashamed of myself for allowing such thoughts to enter my mind on a Sunday morning, but I could not help thinking 'twas exactly the day, a taking

day, for trout; warm, and with cloud enough above to satisfy the most fastidious fisherman. 'Twas a beautiful day indeed; and though there was no extent of prospect, and the dim outline of the Mendips could barely be seen, yet the softness and poetry of the scene around me made amends for the loss of any more distant view. Every turn in the river threw a new picture out to the eye; here an old rustic unparapetted bridge, or a mill, with its dam and noise of falling water hardly breaking the Sabbath rest, formed a "bit of foreground;" and there an old farm house, with its old trees, (their odd and irregular branches and crownless heads, like what Gainsborough loved to paint,) and its homestead and sheds, from which piled-up bundles of teazles peeped out, made the prominent point of the landscape. Congresbury woods, too, with their old trees looking young in their new foliage were an ever present object; and I had for the companions of my way quiet thoughts and pleasant memories: and that dear ever restless summer visitant of our river-meadows, the "home building, wedded, and divorceless swallow," (as it is called in that superb passage in the Aids to Reflection,) now flitting by me with the directness of an arrow, now skimming the river's surface with unequal wing; was always crossing my path, and always beautiful, and always graceful.

The only persons I passed were here and there some rural labourer fishing water-cresses from the pool with a crooked stick for his Sunday dinner. Indeed, I did not want other associations than those of nature and natural objects at the moment, and I could say or sing with Izaak Walton, in his "Angler's Wish,"—

> "I in these flowery meads would be,
> These crystal streams could solace me,
> To whose harmonious gliding noise
> I with my angle would rejoice.
> Listen, and see the turtle dove,
> Court his chaste mate to acts of love."

Old Izaak! what a queer composition of fisherman and

churchman, devout angler and devout Christian he was. Thomas à Kempis said he knew "nothing preferable to salmon but the Psalms of David;" and you really are in doubt whether Izaak Walton more loved the Book of Common Prayer or the carp, "the queen of rivers;" whether he was more a devout admirer of the Thirty-nine Articles or of a good trout; he is now reciting Herbert's piety-breathing verses, and, perhaps, the next moment telling you how to have a constant supply of gentles out of a dead cat or kite; now discoursing with his "loving scholar" on theology, and anon listening across some honey-suckle hedge to the gossip of gipsies. In fact, there is no separating Izaak's religion from his rod, and if fly-fishing was not part of his belief, it is quite plain, as he tells us, that he thought "God never did make a more calm, quiet, recreation than angling;" the sentence, however, is so quaint I cannot help giving it. "Indeed my good scholar," says Izaak, "we may say of angling, as Dr. Boteler said of strawberries, 'doubtless God could have made a better berry, but doubtless God never did;' and so, if I might be judge, God never did make a more calm, quiet, and innocent recreation than angling." Honest Izaak! it was a wicked wish of my Lord Byron, that

> "The quaint old cruel coxcomb in his gullet,
> Had a hook and a strong trout to pull it."

But here, while I have been gossiping about Izaak Walton, have Wrington peals been ringing in my ears, and Wrington tower, tall, beautiful, and symmetrical, like a fair vision, full in sight, to assert, as it were, the surpassing architectural taste and talent of other days. This is what makes English country scenery unlike any and all others in the world; when suddenly, as it were, in the midst of rural associations, which beguile the mind away from the recollection of man and society, some splendid Church tower, some noble ecclesiastical pile, opens upon the view, to show the presence of civilization and the triumph of arts. To those who have ever passed

this Church, no description of its exterior appearance is necessary; to those who have not I would say, fancy one of the finest country Churches, and with certainly one of the most exquisite and imposing towers you have ever seen, and you have just as good and idea of the structure, and perhaps a better, than I can give you by a confused account of orders, and tracery, and niches, and drips, and buttresses, about which I sometimes talk until I am unintelligible to myself; what must it then be to the reader?

The first thing that attracted my attention on entering the churchyard, was a poor but new freestone Gothic monument, set in the gable end of a small thatched house, which abutted on the burying ground, and bearing the following inscription:—

JOHN LOCKE
Was born in this house A. D. MDCXXXVI.
This stone was erected by the inhabitants of this Parish,
A. D. MDCCCXLI.

The tablet would have been complete had they attached the name of the writer of so elegant an inscription, where the pronoun *this* hisses so harmoniously three times in four lines. The parentage of such a composition should be placed beyond conjecture, for at present the honours of authorship oscillate between the schoolmaster and the parson. While I was copying the inscription on the blank leaf of my Prayer Book, a good-looking young woman, who I fancy is now an inhabitant of the mighty metaphysician's birth place, amused herself, in the absence of any more active employment for the "understanding," in laughing at me through the gate, while my ancient friend John Bennett, out of whose recollection I appear to have grown, was suspiciously dodging me at a distance. Somewhere here, too, in this yard are, I suppose, interred the remains of old parson Leeves, the composer of the beautiful ballad of "Auld Robin Gray," which will live when all your Italian arias are in the Ægean. Old Leeves was Rector or Vicar of this parish, and of great musical genius, which was

inherited by one of his sons, whom I recollect for many years scratching a double bass in the gallery, with great unction, against the combined voices of the parish school and parish schoolmaster.

Beneath a tomb, within an iron rail to the south east of the Church, repose the ashes of Mrs. Hannah More and her four sisters, Mary, and Betty, and Sally, and Patty, the last but one having been called by her family "Prosy," in contradistinction to the gifted author of the sacred dramas, who went within the domestic circle by the more flattering denomination of "Poetry." Indeed, Wrington, the place, the parish, and the Church, outside and in, if the phrase may be permitted, are full of Hannah More; so much so, that an old friend of mine (who was fond of a pun, whether it was good, bad, or indifferent) used to call it *Mauritania*. Besides Barley Wood, which promises to become as great a local lion as Adrian's Villa at Tivoli, and the tomb I have already referred to, there is an immense tablet over the interior doorway of the south porch, in which I am afraid to say how many square feet of white marble, and all the English language are used up to commemorate her genius, her learning, her liberality, her piety. There was so much of it I despaired of carrying away even a tenth part of the fine things said; but I have a sort of general misty impression on my mind of a cloud of superlatives. Hannah More did not die at Barley Wood; shocked at the extraordinary consumption of vivers in the kitchen, she left it some years before her death, and still further enlarged the sphere of her usefulness by contracting her cuisine. But I would not speak of this excellent woman with anything but respect and gratitude. She was highly thought of in her time. From her faith, however, in the moral efficacy of parish tea parties, one would have thought she contemplated reforming the world by means of flowery Pekoe; in point of intellectual ability, too, perhaps she was overrated, though far from deserving the impudent sneer of that graceless fellow Pindar, who talks of

"Sacred dramas by Miss Hannah More,
In which the muses, and young Moses snore."

But her writings, by having a less ambitious aim, had a more happy and wholesome effect than the effusions of higher minds and more vigorous intellects; and at a time when the popular temper and popular principles were unsettled, her Tracts, by conveying moral and religious instruction in an easy and attractive way, gave a salutary tone to the thoughts and tendencies of the poor; and by insinuating themselves into the interest, gradually, and as it were, insensibly improved the minds, and softened the affections of the cottager and peasant. Her exertions in starting schools, too, and the difficulties against which she struggled, and which she overcame with more than masculine determination—a supine and jealous parochial clergy being amongst her greatest impediments—must make her memory respected by all good subjects, who wish to see, in her own words to Mrs. Kennicott, "Loyalty make a part of the religion of the poor." She managed all these things, too, with a woman's tact and address. She had a hundred little arts for enticing them to school, and by way of giving them a thirst for the fountains of knowledge, she had two thousand at a time to drink tea with her on the top of Mendip; and a glorious sight it must have been on the summer evening, and on these sublime heights, to hear so great a multitude thundering forth the simple but majestic strains of the Doxology—*Dux fœmina facti.*

Hannah More was a practical woman, and as I call her to mind this moment, with her mob cap and her large dark penetrating eyes, just as she is painted by Pickersgill, she seemed more than a common-place woman; and it would be well if many of the lady religionists of the present day, instead of wasting their sweetness in unprofitable polemical parties, and theological classes, would imitate, each according to her means, the active utility of Mrs. More; for it is not every one who can have Sir William Pepys and Wilberforce's purses to put their

fingers in every time they please. Still, Hannah More, however canonized she may be by young clergymen, had her foibles and her mortal (shall I say, her woman's) weakness, like the rest of the world; and after all that has been written and said, and for ought I know, sung on the subject, I feel convinced she played the petty lady patroness, and a very little bit of the lady tyrant too, towards Ann Yearsley, the "Bristol Milkwoman."

This poor woman, as is well known, sold milk, and from going to water it each morning at the Pierian font, caught at length the poetic fervour. Mrs. Hannah More, whom she served with cream, was struck by the *superior* merit of her verses, and became her patroness. Mrs. More's name was enough to sell worse poetry, or even worse milk, than Ann Yearsley's; Milton had no such friend, and could not get twenty pounds for Paradise; but Ann Yearsley's Book brought her some three hundred guineas. Hannah More, as she was the artificer, wanted also to become the manager of the milkwoman's little fortune; but the milkwoman thought she was competent to take care of it herself, and wanted to bind her boys out to trades. The lady patroness was offended at the independence of the *protégé*, who had been taken from under the milk pails—Ann Yearsley dared to differ from her benefactor, and was denounced as an ungrateful woman; all Mrs. More's idolaters declared against her, and the whole religious world opened on her in full cry, and ran her to some solitary retirement in Wiltshire. A few evenings ago I sat down to rest myself by her tomb in Clifton churchyard; but I did not strew any flowers, for I had none to strew.

At Wrington I loitered about the burial-ground for some time, as I had a good half hour to spare. There were a few lazy Sunday loungers lolling over the wall, with hardly sufficient energy of mind or body to turn round and look at me; so, for want of more interesting objects of view, I strolled on towards the *back-front*, I suppose I must call it, of the parsonage, and recalled to mind the catastrophe which occurred there when the late

Parson Leeves' effects were "submitted to public competition," and buyers and bidders, auctioneer and all, suddenly disappeared through the floor; and really the tall tenement looks at this moment as if it were withheld by compunction alone from falling on the present proprietor. This is a pity; for it is in a pleasant situation, and I used to think it a pretty place long ago, when I strolled by in summer, on a Saturday evening, and saw the parson preparing his sermon by the open window, and occasionally turning his eyes for a thought towards the Mendips.

I don't know how old Wrington is, and I don't care; the inhabitants fancy it has great antiquity. My old friend Davies, with whom I sometimes passed a Sunday, used to say, tapping the mahogany summits of his old tops with his cane, "In the time of Adam, sir, it was a market town of some importance, but ceased to be so about the time of Noah; and has not made much advancement since in that respect." Worthy Davies was the beau ideal of a Welsh parson; he was supposed to attend to the souls of the parishioners of Puxton; and I recollect going into Church one Sunday as he was reading the service, lolling listlessly as he did so with his head on one hand; he was just in the middle of the Lord's Prayer as I entered; and he opened his mouth and yawned from ear to ear. The only excuse I can offer for him is, that it was a close summer's day, and he had been brewing all the week. However, my really estimable friend was not singular in this; there are a great many in the present day, who thank God "they are not as other men are;" and yet go through the beautiful prayers of the Church as if they were reading an Act of Parliament.

The peals had ceased, and the little sanctus bell had taken up the thread of their discourse, when I entered the Church, which I did through the chancel door, and turned into the next pew that I found open, and which was one immediately behind the reading-desk—a situation from which I had an opportunity of seeing the miscellaneous collection of old printed parish papers, pack-thread, and spectacle-cases, which the parson had stowed away on a

shelf appropriated to such purposes. A lady, with a world of artificial flowers in her bonnet, was the only intern with myself. Had she been disposed to be communicative, I should have asked her something about the antiquities of the Church, of which I don't know a ha'p'orth; but there was something about her that discouraged any advance towards familiar conversation. Perched on the seat of a pew opposite, close by the screen, was a little girl in a white bonnet and a red head, pulling away at the sanctus bell, the sound of which came down deadened and dreamily upon us.

I had abundant leisure to look about me and admire the proportions and details of one of the best parish Churches in Somersetshire. Certainly, our Popish progenitors knew how to build places of worship; and though we can't admire their creed, we have good cause to be thankful for their industry; for it is well they built decent Churches for us, as we are not disposed to do so for ourselves. At least we must confess, that to monkish taste in grouping pier and arch, and parapet and pinnacle together, in one harmonious whole, we are indebted for such noble parish Churches as Wrington, and Yatton, and Congresbury, and Banwell, and Backwell.

Nearly the whole of Wrington, and indeed almost all the Churches in this part of Somersetshire, are Perpendicular. It is perfectly formed, consisting of a nave, north and south aisles, and chancel, with a good porch; the nave, which is divided from the side aisles by rows of arches springing from light and lofty piers, is lit by a clerestory, the windows of which are of good size and symmetry. There is an elaborate altar screen—I believe, more properly called reardos—of perpendicular work; and which, if not new, has seemingly been recently repaired. There is also a fine rood screen—I mean the screen which divides the chancel from the main part of the Church; and which, as the tourists say, is much admired for its beautiful flower and fret work.

The Church is, of course, full of the usual cumbrous traces of the village carpenter; at the west end of the

north aisle there is a group of private apartments, inclosed with red curtains, something like the dinner boxes of a city chop-house; and there is a little gallery for the accommodation of a first and second flute, and the small boys who sing. This part of the service was very languid; the flutes were plaintive enough, and the schoolmaster sung as well as a weak voice and a stiff cravat would permit him; and even the lads were not loath to lend their aid; but the congregation were quite content to leave it all to them.

I have noticed Mrs. Hannah More's monument already; there are some others. Nearly opposite, in the north aisle, is a curious one to a "lovely youth," with whose virtues and accomplishments I could not venture to charge my memory; and in the chancel is a tablet, on which, as well as I can recollect, are these words, addressed to some excellent lady, of whose virtues marble is a very inadequate memorial:—

> "Accept, O happy spirit! these little rites, the only testimony of their filial piety thy children can give: also, the remains of a grandchild, Whilhelmina M'Kenzie, aged 3 years 3 months."

I know I cannot lay claim, at my age, to any great clearness of intellect! but at first I thought it read as if the "happy spirit" was requested to accept, not merely the little rites, but (unnatural offering!) the remains of her little grandchild too; but I dare say they did not mean it.

The Rev. —— Thompson, the Curate, who has written some sermons, and a life of Hannah More to order, read and preached on the present occasion. Mr. Thompson is a neat preacher; indeed, I don't think I ever knew one to whom the term *neat* might be more truly and pointedly applied; he is neat in his appearance, he is neat in his reading, he wears a neat gown, and his compositions are neat. He does every thing with a critical precision; and is one of those persons who, I should say, judging from what I saw of him, before writing his sermon, nibbed his pen with particular nicety, smoothed his quire of paper before him,

placed his inkstand in a certain position, and never sat down to his work without equilateral editions of the Bible and Cruden's Concordance at each elbow. His orthoepy (this is a fine word for pronunciation,) is faultless, nay, fastidious; and "Pharöah" and "Caïaphas" were "mentioned" with an almost reverential respect for the dicœresis. Indeed, I should as soon expect to hear of a breach in the walls of Wrington Church, as of a breach of orthography, etymology, syntax, or prosody, in the compositions of its Curate. His sermon, which was preached from Deuteronomy, chapter vi., verse 13, on the day of my visit, had all the characteristics of his style; it was distinct, clear, neat, and correct; you could not have picked a hole in it if, like a woodpecker, you went round and round it, trying it in every passage for a whole day: but it wanted muscle —it wanted originality—it wanted force; while it "went on refining" rather too much for a rural congregation.

Now, if you say I expect too much, I admit it was a better sermon than one hears from nineteen out of twenty of the ordinary race of country Curates, who spend five days of the week making their cider, the sixth in making a sermon, and the seventh in preaching it; but you will bear in mind, that Mr. Thompson is a writer of sermons of some reputation, for the London market: he has written a book or two also, and is not to be measured by the same standard that you would apply to a mere working parish minister, who lives in a square parsonage all the days of his life, and eats beans and bacon without Greek, like Goldsmith's professor. In fact, we look for something out of the common in such a man. It is true that pulpit literature (if we may call sermons by this name,) has not of late years borne a very high character. Coleridge said, "I read all sorts of books with some pleasure except modern sermons;" and the critical and logical Bayle observes, in his Republic of Letters, speaking of London, "We see here sermons swarm daily from the press. Our eyes only behold manna; are you desirous of knowing the reason? it is, that the ministers, being permitted to read their sermons from the pulpit, buy all they meet with, and take

no other trouble than to read them; and thus pass for able scholars at a very cheap rate." Still, considering the object of, and what has been done and is capable of being done in, sermon writing, we cannot but think highly of it as a department of literary composition; and the man who, in his quiet country seclusion, writes good sermons for those who cannot write good ones for themselves, does the Church, if not the State, some service.

The Rector is the Rev. — Vane; John Vane, I believe. I am not aware whether he is anything to Oliver Cromwell's friend, "the Lord deliver us" Vane, or whether the obviousness of the quotation ever tempts the parishioners to apply it to their pastor; he has, however, been a very fortunate man, for he has two or three good country parishes, a London living; and is, or was, one of the chaplains of the House of Commons, having daily during the session to pray for the collective wisdom at something handsome a-head. He is a great favourite with all his farming friends, for he thinks with Cicero, "*Nihil melius agriculturâ*," (at least some friend in my hearing the other day quoted it, as he said, from Cicero,) and seemingly believes the first object of study for a country clergyman should be composts; he appears to be as well acquainted with Liebig as with Jeremy Taylor; is an authority on the succession of crops, and great on the subsoil plough. I recollect my excellent neighbour, Squire Sampson, when lecturing some successful competitors, at Chew Magna, telling them "to be good churchmen and they would become good ploughmen;" and there are some clergymen who seem to hold the converse of this, and think if they make their parishioners good ploughmen, they are sure to become, as a consequence, good churchmen. Mr. Vane makes a smart speech at an agricultural dinner, but I never heard him in the pulpit. He is, however, esteemed as a very liberal and kind-hearted friend in the country, and devotes much time and money to advance at least the mundane prosperity of his own and the neighbouring parishes. Though a courtier, too, he manages with much tact and intuitive cleverness the clods

committed to his care; and if he is lucky in having so many parishes, the parishes tell you they are lucky in having him.

The congregation of Wrington is not large, but comprises a pretty fair sprinkling of the several classes in the neighbourhood.

Portbury.

I DON'T pretend to know it for a fact myself, but there are some learned and ancient authors who tell you, that the little village of Portbury, which now consists of a rustic inn and half-a-dozen small houses, was a great Roman fortified city, camp, or station, some eighteen hundred years ago, when the spot on which Bristol now stands was a marshy island, principally frequented by wild geese, cormorants, and curlews. Such things have been, and therefore I do not mean to contradict the ancient authorities who assert so much; but I must say, that if Julius Cæsar, Caracalla, Constantine the Great, or even Ostorius, lodged at the Blue Anchor, there is now no tradition to that effect possessed by the host or his neighbours.

On the right hand side, before you enter the village, and on a pleasant eminence which looks out on the Bristol Channel (its waters dotted with the brown sails of deep-laden merchantmen,) stands the parsonage, a pretty and picturesque Gothic house; and a short distance below it, but on the opposite side of the road, is the fine old Church, its high pitched lead-covered roof and dusky form only partially appearing above and between the three venerable and gigantic yew trees, which stretch forth their solemn arms, as if to shelter it on the south.

The bells were ringing as I passed; and the clergyman, in his gown, and with his wife on his arm, was making his way down from the parsonage to the Church, which induced me to instigate John to a more sturdy walk, that I might not be too late.

You are obliged to wade through a kind of *running road*, rather than river, in order to reach the Blue Anchor. The maid came out to the door to look at me, and then returned and told her mistress, who also indulged in a

distant view and disappeared; the maid a second time reconnoitred and the mistress once more followed her example. Satisfied that they must by this time have seen enough of the stranger, I begged that if they meant I should be in time for even the Collect, they would get some one to take John. Upon this the mistress spoke to the maid, and the maid delivering the spoon with which she was basting a goose to the mistress, put on her pattens, and, *fording the road*, was lost to sight in a moment. In less than five minutes, however, she returned with a rustic in her custody, and to the tender and considerate care of this individual I committed John Bunyan.

Portbury is certainly one of the noblest old Churches about this part of the country. There may be some more highly ornamented, but none that I have seen for situation, size, and aspect, impress you so deeply at first sight. Its lonely locality, down in a wide marsh by the waters of the Bristol Channel, its extensive and sombre, but finely proportioned form suggestive of centuries long gone, and its ancient yews, like venerable sentinels, seeming to watch over its walls, impart to it a solemn air of holy seclusion which cannot fail to strike the stranger.

From the south porch, which is capacious and has a *parvis* or chauntry priest's apartment over head, you enter the Church through a fine old ponderous oak door, which is always on latch—and such a latch—a primitive, substantial, stout piece of timber, which opens with a sound that quite frightens the late comer. On the right hand is still to be seen the holy-water font, in which, "in Catholic days" were immersed the fingers of our forefathers and foremothers as they arrived for first mass.

The interior is quite Cathedral-like; its broad and spacious side aisles almost free from pews, or partially occupied by benches, its lofty nave, its chancel, chauntry, and open west end, giving to its great extent that full effect which one rarely meets with in a mere country Church. But Portbury was not only an ancient but an important foundation. Some of the Berkeleys, whose bones are to be found scattered through almost all the old

Churches in the country, are buried here, and up to the time of the dissolution there were *Placebos, Diriges,* and masses celebrated by chauntry priests for the repose of their souls.

The identical gentleman whom I met at Easton-in-Gordano and Portishead, and who appears to be as much given to roaming as myself, entered at the same moment that I did, and followed me like my shadow across the south aisle to the first cushioned pew next the chancel arch.

Who the Rector of Portbury parish is I cannot say; the Rev. Edward Burges, however, brother to my old school-fellow the Town Clerk of Bristol, is the Curate. Mr. B., though now the pastor of a simple congregation, a minister of peace, was bred up as a man of war; but after serving a considerable time in the Indian army—*cedant arma togæ*—he gave up the command of sepoys and undertook the cure of souls. There is something, however, about him still, that even in the pulpit would remind you of the Burmese war; for if he have not exactly an "eye like Mars to threaten and command," there is a military port about his person, and martial severity in his glance, that make his preaching seem somewhat militant.

The moment I took my seat he turned round in the reading-desk, and gave me such a searching look full in the face that I could have wished myself well out of the Church again, especially as I had a hint that he meant to speak plainly and publicly to the Church-Goer the first time he found him within the walls of Portbury. As I had, however, (the better to disguise myself) left my spectacles and big Prayer Book at home, I hoped that I might elude his penetration; but my chances of escape seemed to grow less and less as the service proceeded, for in the First Lesson, as he came to the words "The wrathful man stirreth up strife," he seemed to direct them with such point to my pew that the eyes of several turned instinctively towards it; and again in the Litany, the prayer against "all uncharitableness" would seem to have

been written for my special rebuke, with so deadly an aim did he level it in my direction. However, I kept up my courage and my countenance as well as I could, though it was with some apprehension, I assure you, I looked forward to the sermon, which was preached from Isaiah liv. 17.

I have previously, however, to offer a few remarks on other portions of the service. Mr. Burges reads rather too rapidly, and he has contracted a habit of smacking his lips at every second sentence, as if he were after tasting something very good, and that quite tickled his palate. The congregation are very orderly and attentive in other respects, but they do not repeat the responses, leaving this duty entirely to a poor attenuated little clerk, who had hardly physical strength enough to send his voice to the fourth pew from him. The psalms and hymns were not merely given out by the Curate, but pitched and led by him with much steadiness and strength; indeed so far did he excel his flock in this respect, that his voice was heard above the rest, so as to seem at times quite a solo. I never before heard a clergyman go so independently and efficiently through this department of his duty, and that without the aid of barrel organ, double bass, bassoon, or flute, from which I presume the parish is without a single musical genius, a rare instance it will be admitted in these "*piping* times of peace." And I fancy, do you know, the singing was nothing the worse, but rather all the better without such instrumental aid, the human voice by itself, unassisted and alone, being, I think, the most solemn and devotional of all musical sounds.

As the clergyman had to continue at the altar until the conclusion of the second singing, and then retire to the vestry to put on his gown, there was rather an awkward gap in, or interruption to, the service for nearly two minutes; a circumstance which made me think it would be just as well had he got a dispensation from the Archbishop of Canterbury to preach in his surplice, which would prevent this hiatus, and leave the clergyman something less heinous than any of the seven deadly sins to

answer for. But I should not advise this course if I thought it would provoke the Portburyans to burn their parson in effigy, or nail up the south porch against him, or lead to an anti-tractarian meeting at the Blue Anchor, with the two churchwardens in one chair.

Mr. Burges's manner and matter in the pulpit are singular and marked. His style is the energetic colloquial —the forcible familiar; he is an extempore preacher, ready, rapid, and self-possessed, but far from polished; indeed, from the conformation of his mind, and his peculiar and variable mode of making himself understood, I think it would not do to confine him to a quire of post and the laws of composition. And I question if he could be so useful under other circumstances, for I never saw a clergyman listened to by a country congregation with such marked attention; every rustic and weather-beaten face was turned towards the pulpit, with a rivetted expression of interest on it; and I confess there was much to attract and awaken attention both in the discourse and the preacher. His words and illustrations were homely, and his sentences, though rough, were short and striking; his manner, too, was very animated, and his voice variable and always audible. He took up into the pulpit with him a large bible; and he had a fashion, when he warmed to his subject, and waxed more energetic than usual, of leaning forward over it, and knitting his brows, so as to remind me of the print of John Knox preaching. It was all plain speaking; he was not, as he said, there to preach "specious philosophy and such *thrash* to them." But for scripture quotations, I never saw a man have such a memory in my life; it was not merely the familiar texts of the New Testament that he cited without a single reference to the bible before him, but the most difficult and *detailing* passages of the Old seemed to come with equal fluency from his lips; he cited, for instance, the family, household, substance, and predial property of Job, "his seven sons and three daughters, his seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses," and all without a reference.

Indeed, his talent for scripture quotation is so great, that I am told he does not confine it to the pulpit; but that he has a text for every incident of ordinary life, and every turn of common conversation. His clerical and clever neighbour, the Rev. William Mirehouse, tells a good story illustrative of his custom in this respect. It was a cold piercing day in winter, and Mr. M. was running along the road to keep himself warm, when he saw the Curate of Portbury coming towards him. Aware of his brother's partiality for texts, the Vicar of Easton-in-Gordano thought that for once he'd do him out of his darling indulgence; so he merely said, as he ran by buttoning up his coat as he spoke, "a sharp day, Mr. Burges." "Yes," said the Curate of Portbury, without pausing, "'Who can stand before his cold?'" (Psalm cxlvii. 17.) "There was no escaping from so quick a hand," added the Vicar of St. George's, as he told the story, "*he shot me flying!*"

But to return to the sermon. As one might expect from a colloquial preacher, an odd expression, or an odd idea, not unfrequently escaped him. An illustration of the scriptural phrase, the "gates of hell," was, perhaps, one of the most remarkable. "The gates of hell shall not prevail," was an oriental figure, he said; as the place of council, where the great men met to consult and take measures against their enemies, was situated by or in the gates of the eastern cities; "it was there they assembled, as the Corporation of Bristol assembled in the Council House, to consult; and hence it was said, 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'" Not being one of the municipal body, I, of course, did not feel the compliment; but had that worshipful phalanx been present, and still possessed their old advowsons, they would, no doubt, have rewarded with a good living the ingenuity that could so flatteringly elucidate the "gates of hell" from the Bristol Town Council! It was quite as good as Cobbett's grammar example, "the House of Commons, a den of thieves."

The Curate had proceeded nearly half-way through his sermon without making any allusion to me, so that I be-

gan to hope my former fears were groundless; when the discourse, taking a sudden turn, he began to enlarge on the various motives which brought people to Church. This was drawing near home; I saw, as the saying is, a cloud coming from Capua, and began to feel uncomfortable. "Some, perhaps," said he, "who never came before, *come to criticise the sermon;*" and he knit his brows and looked terribly towards me, while I, half frightened out of my life, shifted myself under cover of the pillar that interposed between us; where I felt as much at ease as a man might be who, ensconced behind a tree, hears ever and anon the rifle bullets glancing on both sides of him. "Some, perhaps, *come to remark upon the preacher,*" he continued, (and the Indian officer was in his indignant voice,) "but such persons have no business here."

It was not indeed till after the Benediction that I began to breathe freely; and the first use I made of my recovered voice was to say, that I forgave him with all my heart. And I do; indeed, I question if I do not like him all the better for his boldness, though he put me into a terrible fright. He is as severe as the Rev. Horatio Montagu, who has been preaching against me in almost every Church in the diocese, and who is likewise wholly forgiven for his pains.

After service I thought to take a view of the Church, but the Curate, who still continued in the pulpit, followed me with his eye until I was glad to beat a retreat. I could see, however, from the cursory glance I had, that the Church must have been at one time a noble structure, and there are still such remnants of coloured glass, as make me think that every window in the noble pile was at one period "storied" and "richly dight," when the whole must have presented a fine and imposing appearance.

I did not go into the chancel, as I must have passed under fire of the pulpit to do so. Collinson, however, tells us "there are in the south wall three large niches, with a fourth above it, which is smaller; and has at the bottom a basin for holy water,"—a sentence which shows that my friend Collinson set about writing a book of antiquities without knowing anything of ecclesiastical

architecture—the three large niches are the sedilia or seats for the officiating priests, and the smaller the piscina or place where they performed the sacramental ablutions, not a font for holy water; and at the east end of the south aisle there are also the same remains, which show that there was likewise an altar there at one time. There are no monuments that I could see.

The porch is spacious; it was hung with parish papers, and property and income-tax notices. I glanced at the latter with the utmost unconcern, knowing that my annuity being just a shade under the £150, left me free of the collector.

The tombs in the churchyard have nothing remarkable that I know about them, though the old yews, two of which are, at the trunk, eighteen or nineteen feet in circumference, cast a solemn shadow over the simple graves. There is a head-stone, however, fixed up with a pink and blue gold picture of a woman weeping over a sarcophagus, which is the first thing to catch the eye as you approach the Church, and which I would advise the Curate to mutilate and break down some moonlight night.

Mr. Burges is pleasantly lodged in the only house in the parish fit to accommodate the Clergyman, and for which James Adam Gordon, as the owner of all the property round, has the conscience to charge him fifty pounds a year. If I ever inherit Mr. G.'s estate, the Curate shall have his parsonage rent free. As Mr. B. has £70 a-year stipend, after deducting this charge, the large surplusage of £20 for three hundred and sixty-five hard days' work remains. Mr. Burges is in good condition, but he could not have grown fat upon this. However, albeit he preached at me, and was a little injudicious at times in his sermon, I will say he is, though so poorly paid, a zealous, and pains-taking, and hard-working clergyman, and well calculated for a rural congregation, though he might not do, perhaps very famously as one of the Chaplains of St. James's.

I noticed in the neighbourhood some prize allotments, and a farm manured by thunder and lightning—I mean by electricity, or galvanism, or whatever you call it.

Titherington.

In an age so much abounding in early and minute intelligence, it may interest the reader to know that last week, admonished by the rainy gusts and raw mornings, I sent my old great coat to be overhauled; to have the collar looked to, the cuffs renewed, a button or two replaced, and some stray stitches supplied. The Michaelmas daisy and my brown surtout generally make their appearance together, though the latter always holds possession of public attention long after the former has disappeared.

Clad in the panoply of this same surtout, I set out on Sunday last with the sober intention of paying a visit to Tortworth, but by a series of mischances and misdirections Titherington, (some three miles from Thornbury, whether north, south, east, or west, I am sure I cannot say,) was eventually my destination. I cannot well explain how I came to ride so wide of my original mark. I got off my road in some of my ruminations; and when I come to consider how I was engaged in anything but meditating upon my route, I am not much surprised at the occurrence.

These October days always set my brains wool-gathering on mortality, man, life, and death; for all nature round about you is suggestive of such "far resistless musings." I rode on amidst a shower of falling leaves—flakes of dead foliage, turning their sered and whitened surfaces over and over as they descended, filled the air, and death, death, death was going on busily in the vegetable world on all sides; each bleached and withered leaf that fell was the corpse of a created thing that once was "green in youth," shone in the sunshine, and fluttered in the summer breeze, full of life. Then the gale made such sport of their poor forms; some huddled in heaps under the shelter of the hedge, and decayed away in each other's arms, as if "lovely in their lives, in death they would not

be divided;" but those that fell on the highway were caught up by the wind, and whirled about in a kind of death dance, rattling their crisp skeletons against each other and along the dry road, or leaping up wildly in the air as if they tried to reach their native branches again. Every time a blast, too, more strong than usual, made the oaks swing about their knotted arms with increased violence, down came the acorns out of their husks, with sharp taps on my hat and shoulders, as if the arch equinoctial spirits were up in the great boughs above me, and pelted the traveller in their rude sport as he passed beneath; while two bold blackbirds kept dashing in and out of the bushes, romping in the hedgerows for half-a-mile before me, and frightening the sparrows which rose in thick whirring clusters, startled at their boisterous mirth. Even John, I saw, felt that the summer was gone; and if ever rider could interpret the feelings of his horse, I should say his gravity was hurt at the wild sport which the wind made amongst the few remaining hairs of his mane, and the bushy but abridged honours of his tail. He did not seem happy; and when the sow, which had been grubbing with its young brood for the fallen acorns amongst the grass on the road side, put up its nose, and all its nine farrow put up their little noses also, as if in greeting, he took no notice, or else snorted gruffly, as much as to say, "I'm out of temper to-day; I don't understand having my tail blown about out of all shape, or in between my legs, in this way."

Just as I have led you, my dear reader, wide of the subject for the last forty lines, did I lose my own way while thinking and wrapt in autumnal fancies on Sunday last. As I said before, I meant to have gone to Tortworth; somewhere in the neighbourhood of Falfield, however, I made a wrong turn, and was aroused from my ruminations by hearing the distant sounds of some Church bells. When you make a blunder, whether it be in life or on a journey, your best way is to stand still until you get some one to set you right, for you seldom gain anything by trying to bungle your way out of it. So I stood still until

a man made his appearance. "What bells, my good friend, are these?" said I. "Titherington, Sir," was the reply.

"Where is Tortworth?"

"A long way; you must go back again, and get out on the main road which you left."

I'll do no such thing, thought I; as I am near Titherington, (some two miles, I learnt from my informant,) I'll go there.

About half-a-mile further on a boy was gathering blackberries, and I asked him at what hour prayers commenced at Titherington. He turned his blackened muzzle to me, all besmeared with the wild fruit, and said, "Don't know, don't go there."

The next party I applied to was a man drawing water out of a well; but in answer to my question he merely scratched his head, and looked bewildered towards his wife, who was standing at the cottage door close by. "We go to chapel," said she, answering for her obtuse spouse, "and can't say." I next rode up to a boy whom I saw, and who, I thought might tell me; but the moment he perceived me approaching, he ran off screaming with fright. You're a civilized race, thought I, in this neighbourhood, but I'll make another trial. I raised the latch of a door, a young woman was washing a child by the fire. "Can you tell me what time service commences at Titherington?" "I can't tell you, indeed, Sir, 'tis so long since I was there. I have not been at Church since Mr. Robertson came."

"Before Mr. Robertson came, at what hour was it?" She smiled, and said, she had forgotten.

My last attempt was at Titherington, where I put the same question to a man who was walking across Tower Hill, which overlooks the village, and his reply was nearly the same. He could not say whether it was half-past ten or eleven, "for it is a place, Sir," said he, "I don't often go to."

I have troubled the reader with this plain, and literal account of my inquiries, as I think he will be able to infer, as I meant to find out, the amount of Church feeling in

the parish and neighbourhood from the nature and quality of the answers returned. The result, he will perceive, was far from satisfactory, and I am not surprised at it; what I subsequently saw in some measure accounted for the coldness and indifference and total indisposition towards the Establishment, which I met with on every side amongst the parishioners.

I am sometimes irreverent enough to wish that my Lord Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol would allow me to lead him to certain parts and parishes in his diocese just as service is commencing, that he might see for himself. I don't mean, of course, that his lordship should travel in his coach, with its mitred panels, and his blue episcopal liveries, for then the murder would out—there would be marvellous preparations, and ministers would be on their good behaviour as soon as ever they perceived us approaching; if it were not a profane wish and thought, I would have his lordship provide himself with a little horse like my own, while I acted as a kind of ecclesiastical esquire, and carried the mitre and crozier—the episcopal helmet and spear—which he could resume when anything called for his prelatic interference or punishment. Oh, how we would surprise some sleepy and remiss servants of the Church, that, "like the fat weed on Lethe's wharf," "rot themselves in ease" and comfortable indolence, careless of their sacred duties and deep responsibilities, while ignorance and schism are spreading around them. When the second man in Egypt discovered himself to his offending brethren with the startling announcement, "I am Joseph!" they were not more astonished than such ecclesiastical delinquents as I refer to would be, were their Diocesan to follow them into the vestry-room after a hurried and careless service, and say, as he turned his massive face sternly on them—"I am James Henry of Gloucester and Bristol!" Oh, I should like to see whether their cheek or their surplice was the whiter. Yet a higher than James Henry of Gloucester and Bristol weekly and daily witnesses their defects of duty, hears them hurry carelessly through the prayers offered to Him, and slur

over His services; and yet, if they are not infidels, and believe what they tell us—that God's eye is upon all, and that thunder and lightning are sleeping day and night awaiting His commands in the clouds—why do they not show themselves more sensible of such awful and abiding surveillance?

After all the vain inquiries which I made, the reader may, perhaps, be curious to know the actual time of morning prayers at Titherington. I cannot tell him, unless it be half-past ten. The number present did not, I think, exceed a dozen. One of the north windows and the south porch being left open, there was a thorough draft in the Church; the wind, which for some time kept rattling amongst the parish notices on the door and trying to loosen them, at length succeeded, carrying the large sheets of assessment papers in with it to the Church, blowing them up and down the flagged aisles and into the empty pews during prayers, tending not a little, I suspect, to disturb the devotions of the dozen worshippers. I know I was half perished by the combined influence of the wind, and the cheerless appearance of things around me.

I had heard that the Incumbent of Titherington was remarkable for the dispatch with which he went through the prayers; I was, therefore, not a little surprised to hear the service read with not merely a decorous but devotional tone and feeling, by the officiating clergyman. It is true that nothing could be greater than the contrast between him and the clerk in this respect; for the latter was about one of the rudest and most uncouth specimens of his class I ever met; it was not merely that his mode of reading was a distressing burlesque of the beautiful liturgy, but, by way of making up for the measured manner of the clergyman, of which he appeared to be somewhat impatient, he frequently omitted entire words. In the Litany, for instance, he never said, "Good Lord, deliver us!" but abbreviated his response throughout to "*'Lard d'liver us.*" I could have almost brained him with my Prayer Book when, after that beautifully comprehensive

supplication, which I once heard an eminent dissenting minister say was worth all the extempore prayers he ever heard—"In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment," he drawled out, with a yawn, this wretched mutilation. The Litany over, there was a momentary pause, and the clergyman looked up towards the little west gallery; but the little west gallery was voiceless—there was no singing "to the praise and glory of God;" he then walked up to the altar and knelt down, the clerk peeping round the corner of the reading-desk after him. The Communion over, the Prayer for the Church Militant was read; and we were dismissed with the parting blessing, but without sermon or singing.

I asked an old man, who sat next me, as we left the Church, who the officiating clergyman was. He could not tell me; he said, 'twas some stranger. Finding my friend not disposed to be communicative, I fell into conversation with another, a farmer in a blue coat.

"I see you had not your own clergyman to-day," said I.

"No," was the reply; "Mr. Robertson would have been quicker at it."

"Well, considering that you have neither sermon nor singing, I think Mr. Robertson himself might afford to take due time at the service, and not gallop through it. How is it you have no singing?"

"I don't know. There are some who do be for having it, but they are not encouraged. Mrs. Morris and Mr. Honneywell, I believe, offered to get books for them, but Mr. Robertson does not see the use of it."

I then enquired how Mr. Robertson came to be absent, and I learnt that he had gone that morning to Berkeley to do the Rev. Seaton Carr's duty, expecting that the Rev. Mr. Hicks, of the neighbouring parish, would do his. But Mr. Hicks had his own duty to do, and could not do Mr. Robertson's; so a search was immediately instituted through the adjoining district, and a Mr. Baker (the gentleman who officiated) was fortunately found to be disengaged, otherwise there would have been no morning

service, I suppose, at all; for as it was the search caused some delay. Now, it strikes me, that instead of leaving his own flock to chance, for the sake of accommodating Mr. Seaton Carr, who, with a larger parish and income, keeps no Curate, and is constantly absent, the Incumbent of Titherington ought to have remained at home, and not deserted his parish, that Mr. Seaton Carr might go a pleasuring from his. Because the latter finds Berkeley "slow," and runs up to town, it is no reason that the neighbouring congregations are to be cavalierly treated by their own clergyman, out of courtly complacency to a person whose peculiar mode of managing his parish is proverbial throughout the diocese. And now, by the way, I should like to know how the Bishop has settled matters with Mr. Carr. I have heard something of his Lordship compelling him to keep a Curate, but I have heard nothing of a Curate being kept; and I sincerely hope the episcopal authority is not like the laws of the Grecian legislator, which were compared to a spider's web, through which the great flies would break, and only the small ones be enmeshed. Mr. Carr may be strong in the protection of a powerful nobleman, but not too strong, I am sure, to resist the authority of his Diocesan, if sternly and vigorously put forth. We see the effects of Mr. Carr's contumacy in this respect. It is not merely that the people of Berkeley are neglected, but the neighbouring parishes run the risk of being neglected also, because he will not keep a Curate. I cannot conceive anything more indecorous, in fact, than this ransacking the country round about on a Sunday morning for some stray clergyman to do your duty, while you do another man's; and keeping the bell ringing, perhaps, beyond its time, while the clerk is prosecuting a hurried search from house to house. I should, therefore, advise the Incumbent of Titherington to remember the adage, that "charity begins at home," for the future; and if any congregation is to be left without prayers, let it be the congregation of Berkeley, for which Mr. Carr is responsible.

With regard to the manner in which the service is per-

formed at Titherington, I think enough has transpired to show that it is not what it ought to be. In the first place, the practice which obtains too much in country parishes, of merely having one sermon on the Sunday, is most objectionable. In a city or town Church no such thing could take place; and I don't see why it is not equally convenient for a clergyman living in a quiet country parish, with little to disturb his attention during the week, to prepare two sermons for Sunday, as it is for a town Curate or Incumbent. Indeed, I can't see why it ought not to be more so; if there is one place above another that might invite to meditation, it is your retired rural parsonage. Seated in my snug study, with my books around me, far from the mortal coil of the city—the *fumum, opes strepitumque Romæ*—and looking out on field and tree and stream, I think I could go on composing for days together. I'd have the windows open in summer, and let the bees soothe me to reflection as they hummed around the over-hanging honey-suckle; and in winter, the cheerful log roaring up the Gothic fire-place should console me and my old setter on the hearth-rug for the absence of flowers and the presence of snow. The very thought is enough to set one a-writing sermons; and such pleasing little sermons, too—simple and natural, and dotted with quaint quotations from the Fathers—so portable that the rustic reader might carry them away with him to his cottage, and make them household and familiar lessons of wisdom. It is a mistake to say that the country congregations would be impatient of two sermons in the day. I don't believe it; on the contrary, the more plain people are the more the interest, I think, with which they listen to sermons. It is only your self-sufficient, worldly-read persons who affect to denounce sermons as dull.

With respect to the singing, or rather the absence of singing at Titherington, I would fain hope that my informant was not quite correct when he told me that the Incumbent discouraged it; for I can hardly conceive any clergyman refusing the tender of service and assistance in this department. Why, if I were an Incumbent, sooner

than have this interesting part of public worship wanting in my Church, I should go from house to house, and cottage to cottage, and enlist all the young voices in the work; I should get Hullah-ized myself, and Hullah-ize all the parish in return. I'd buy a pitch-pipe, and if there was a man in the parish who could blow a flute or play a great fiddle, he should be my *Magnus Apollo;* I'd have them practice, too, every evening until they were perfect enough, at least for the Old Hundredth. I'd take Mrs. Morris and Mr. Honeywall's offer, you may be sure; and before many weeks the sound of praise should be heard—the most touching of all rebukes—by the parish loiterer, as he passed by the porch of the parish Church, on the Sabbath morning.

If it concerns the reader at all to know who held the Manor of Titherington in the reign of Edward I., I believe I am correct in saying, upon the authority of Sir Robert Atkyns, that it was by the family of the Corbets; it afterwards descended to the Bradestanes, of Berkeley, who fell in for rather a lion's share of things at the time. From them it passed on through the Poles, the Willoughbys, down to the Grevilles, the last of whom rejoiced in the name of Fulke, restored Warwick Castle in the time of King James I., was stabbed by his servant for not being a sufficiently grateful master, and was buried beneath an inscription of "his own composing," in which he simply describes himself as "A servant of Queen Elizabeth, a Councillor of King James, and a friend of Sir Philip Sidney."

The Church is old and large, consisting of two side aisles, a nave, and chancel; it is rude, and remarkable for no architectural feature of interest or character; it is, however, as well as the churchyard, very neatly and cleanly kept. There are a few mural monuments, but none of any very ancient date; the one in the chancel, to the Rev. Richard Bridges, Rector of Cromhall, and dated 1656, is, I think, the oldest.

From the top of Tower Hill, which overlooks the village, and which seemed to me a kind of common, there is a noble view.

Bauham Abbots,

So called, I suppose, because it was in olden times one of the snug little appendages to Keynsham monastery, on the other side of the Avon. A glorious barn, with its deep massive buttresses, pointed roof, and long slit-like loop-hole windows, still stands to attest the former sway of the monks, and the good care they took to secure that share of the fat of the land which fell to their lot. This building now belongs and attaches to the Court (the manorial residence close by,) which literally attaches to the Church, against the west end of the tower of which it is built; the whole standing, as they do, in picturesque and monastic repose in the centre of an old and well wooded demesne, having a very pleasing, but singular and characteristic effect. No wall, boundary, or mark separates the little ancient—very ancient—Church, with its long, low, out-stretching nave and chancel, from the park in which it stands; the old porch projects on a sloping lawn; and the devious paths which lead the parishioners from different directions to its sacred portals, pass winding through the wooded acres of a private possessor; while, I may say, the little Church itself casts its solemn shadow on the green sward that surrounds it, by the sufferance of individual ownership. In fact, from the situation and circumstances of the structure, you would think it rather a private chapel to the adjoining Court than a place of public worship; and indeed some of the owners of the mansion, even in my own time, appear to have acted as if they were under the same impression themselves; for I recollect Humphrey Creswicke, when he dispensed justice of old in his summer parlour, had a door opened therefrom into the Church, where the litigants used to wait until their turn to receive, each his or her quota of law or equity from the hands of Humphrey, arrived. The reader

will say this was desecration, to convert the aisles of "the house of God" into waiting rooms for parochial quarrellers, with their hearts full of envy, hatred, malice, and all ill-will. To be sure it was; but the justice and the parson (now dead) were in those days great friends; and the latter, in consideration of the manifold accommodations he received at the Court, thought he would be more neighbourly than nice, and lend the Church as some poor return for civilities received.

I recollect the old Church, and the old place, many, many years. While yet a boy, I can remember being impressed, when passing with my esteemed father through the park, by the ferocious aspect of the Creswicke lions, rampant upon shields, and which glared and made mouths at the intruder from every point of the demesne. The property, however, has since then, and till recently, been in Chancery, a pleasant place for improving properties, and the consequence to the Creswicke lions has been most disastrous; for I found, on my late visit, that several of them were little more than shapeless trunks, many were shorn of their glory and their tails, and only a few could boast of anything like a due complement of legs. I recollect, too, the fine old manorial hall, with its bold, deep, embayed fire-place, and the great pine log crackling as it lay across the fire dogs. A glorious jolly old apartment to my feudal imagination, was this; and all you had to do was to paint its spacious proportions, its panelled screen and walls, its dais and long old oak table, its armour, its Saracen heads, old china, and wide deep-set window, as they were and are, and let fancy throw in a lady and gentleman, a high-heeled cavalier and dame, or two, in ruffs and hose, to have as characteristic a picture of olden time as you could desire. Several of the family ancestors, looking very grim and rigid on canvas, seem to have been held by cobwebs to the walls; and for some time, until justice migrated to the summer parlour, they supervised the weekly distribution of that rural luxury, law, by their posterity, or lowered jealously on the dole of home-brew amongst the litigants.

One of these "men *on* buckram" was, I think, the counterfeit presentment of a Sir Somebody Creswicke, whose portrait also hangs in the Council-house of Bristol, under the custody of my best of local cicerones, the Chamberlain. The worthy knight was an alderman, and principal founder and enricher of the family, being one of the few amongst them that understood Cocker: indeed, upon one occasion he was rather too great a calculator and economist for his own convenience, when his sharp eye to Number One brought his neck in jeopardy from a sharper axe. The story is this: at a short distance from the manor-house, and between it and the river are Sidenham Meads, where the Duke of Monmouth, at the time of James II., lay encamped with his army for a brief time before they were cut up into minced meat at Sedgemore; while here his Grace and his followers helped themselves to the "goods the gods provide," or placed within their reach round about. Amongst the worldly substance so consumed and appropriated were a mow or two of hay belonging to the Alderman, at the Court close by, and who, having had a commercial education, drew out a formal bill, I should suppose somewhat after the following fashion:—

"His Grace the Duke of Monmouth,
"To Anthony Creswicke, Dr.
"Item, to a mow of hay eaten by your Grace's Horses, £5 10*s*.
"5 per cent. discount for cash. The rick-cloths allowed for if returned."

Having made out his bill, and provided himself with a receipt stamp, the Bristol Alderman walked down to the rebel camp, and presented the docket in person to his Grace, but whether paid or not history doth not aver. His visit, however, did not go unobserved; he had some good neighbours, who saw him and informed; he was accused of consorting with and comforting the insurgent army, and it was only by great exertions that the house of Creswicke saved their head, and the Alderman his. There are still extant amongst the old family papers urgent letters

from the latter, when in trouble, to some of the noblemen of the county, the Duke of Beaufort, the Marquis of Chandos, &c., calling on them to answer for his loyalty, and assigning the reasons already given for inducing him to seek an interview with the rebel Duke. He got off; his jeopardy, however, will convey a moral, namely, that people ought not to be too prompt to send in their bills—a lesson which I hope will not be lost on my tailor when Christmas comes. The property has lately passed into other hands—a further proof (as I am sure my excellent and indefatigable friend, the Vicar of ———, will bear me out in saying) that property taken from the Church is never permanent in possession. It is not for me to say whether the "curse of the monks" of Keynsham has had anything to do with the inheritance or not, but I know the Creswickes no longer have.

Nothing could possibly be more simple and rustic than the interior of the Chapel, with its low roof, and still lower browed arches. The dim light of a late autumnal afternoon came timorously and thinly in through small and irregular windows, and hardly disturbed the shadows that appeared still to linger, as if from the previous night, in the dark corners of the little depressed and mysterious South aisle. The whole would be obscure and dreary enough to look upon, if it were not for a large stove that burned brightly in the middle of the Church, and in an open space around which the pews had been cleared away. Here the poor old people of the parish sat, and certainly they had the most comfortable situation in the Church, reversing the fashion which otherwise but too generally obtains, and which allots to the sons and daughters of the poor, in less primitive parishes, less "pleasant places." The old folks themselves seemed to enjoy it; and it was with some feeling of longing I saw from my chill situation the briskly-burning sea-coal blaze reflected in their wrinkled faces. From feeling warm they began to be loquacious, and while the congregation were yet entering, and the bell ringing, they gossipped away with wondrous familiarity. "And how be thee to-day, goody?" said an

old fellow to an equally ancient croney, by whom he sat down. "Very well, and how be thee, John?" was the reply, and then continued for some time a colloquy in such a key as to be audible to us all; though no one seemed surprised but myself. They were used to it.

I wish the parish orchestra were more punctual. When in the morning I attended Jefferies' Hill I found my way to the new Church by following a great fiddle, which emerged from a house in the neighbourhood. I believe it to be the same fiddle that *officiated* in the ancient Chapel of the Hanham Abbots in the afternoon; it therefore, perhaps, was too fatigued to be in time. Nevertheless I think it most desirable if they could contrive to be punctual. I merely make the observation suggestively, for I know how touchy and easily offended, and ready to fly off on their high horse the great unpaid of a parish choir are; they are the minister's masters and mistresses, and even the parish squire is often as tractable as a lamb compared with them. Just "hint a fault or hesitate dislike" to any of their proceedings, and they'll

> "Throw down their '*fiddles*,' dare depart
> In savage grandeur home;"

The glorious grumble of the bass-viol will cease in a huff, the first and second flutes disjoint themselves in dudgeon, and the clarionet retire in offended dignity to its green baize bag, and all be silent for ever after, unless an abject apology be made. I therefore say what I have to say humbly and with all respect. Gentlemen musicians, do condescend to come in time. It is not very conducive to devotion to hear, just as the clergyman is saying "I will arise and go to my Father," a great big fiddle go thumping and bumping up stairs, and afterwards during the most beautiful parts of the Litany to have the ear of worship vexed by the twisting of pegs and the tuning of strings, which ought to have been done before service began.

Indeed, while music is rightly considered a great aid to

solemnity and effect, there are many country choirs whose acts and irreverence are calculated to create quite a different sensation. In some primitive parishes, the reader is aware, it is the practice to write the psalms to be sung on a slate, which is hung over the gallery for the information of the flock below. The custom is a convenient one; but I recollect one occasion when it spoiled my devotion for the day; I think it was at Isle Brewers, (Dr. Wolff's pastoral charge;) the clerk, when he had partly given out the psalms, discovered that the usual telegraph had not been lowered; his announcement, therefore, when interrupted, ran thus—"Let us sing to the praise and ——, I say, (looking up to the gallery,) why don't thee hang out the slate there?" I mention this incident only to illustrate that parish orchestras look for the most part upon themselves in the light of mere parish musicians, and have little or no sense of the solemnity of their situation or of that portion of the service which appertains to them.

As the same clergyman officiated at Jefferies' Hill in the morning, (where I also attended,) and at Hanham Abbots in the afternoon, I will retrace my steps, and with a brief notice of the former, bring my present irregular and somewhat reversed paper to a conclusion. However, before bidding adieu to Hanham Abbots, let me say a few words on its internal fittings up. Its aspiring wood work almost meets its ceiling. There are high pews, and huge pews, and locked pews, and closed pews, and self-appointed pews, and *inscribed* pews, in three inch letters, JOHN COUCH!!! Who is "John Couch?" said I, as I read the black and yellow-shaded characters across the door. "The Churchwarden," said somebody close by. Then Mr. John Couch had better have his likeness painted underneath, for his parochial glory will be incomplete until his countenance is perpetuated.

Worship in a Workhouse—Bedminster Union.

Let not the sympathetic reader be concerned at this commencement, for though I have found my way at length into a Workhouse, the old man is still independent of the new poor law, and hopes to continue so, by the blessing of Heaven and the help of the three-and-a-half per cents.; for albeit Burns very complacently says,—

> "The last o' it, and the worst o't
> Is *only just to beg;*"

being no poet myself, I cannot look upon the comparatively easy occupation of mendicancy, or the more industrial independence of bone crushing, with such calm resignation. If I could not have my comforts, I suppose I should be obliged to do without them, like other sexagenarians; but I confess at this present moment it puzzles me marvellously to think how I could abandon even the accustomed luxury of the arm chair in which I am writing. Talk as you will, there is something sombre about old age, and "plain unaccommodated man," as Shakespeare says, at my time of life, requires all that philosophy, a warm dressing gown, and a well kept fire side can do to keep him from the veteran vice of testiness. I have a special enmity to hypocrisy, both in abstract quality and individual character, and I will avow, notwithstanding the sublime indifference which some venerable philosophers affect for the comforts and accommodations of this life, that I appreciate and am thankful for them, and have never pretended to a partiality for a more primitive or less luxurious lot. "D'Alembert relates," says Gibbon in his delightful Autobiography, and when solacing himself with his fortunate fate in life, "that as he was walking in the gardens of Sans Souci with the King of Prussia, Frederick said to him, 'Do you see that old woman, a poor weeder, asleep on that sunny bank?

She is probably more happy than either of us.' The king and the philosopher," adds the historian, with charming candour and brevity, "may speak for themselves; *for my part I do not envy the old woman.*" A quiet satire upon a kind of cant only too common, which some people adopt for the sake of saving their pockets, and others through a morbid wish to appear less happy to other people than they are. You may depend upon it easy circumstances are a wonderful adjunct to the enjoyment of old age; nor is my thankfulness at all diminished by the value I attach to the accessories around me. When October was wearing out, and I saw the last leaves of the Virginian creeper opposite my parlour window kindle and redden up with a bright hectic glow, which, like the burning spot on the cheek of consumption, only told of near decay and dissolution; and one by one the flowers died away, leaving the cold frigid chrisanthemum almost the only tenant of the garden, could I, think you, have looked forward to the prospect of winter with half the grateful resignation I did, had I not been able to turn my chair round to a cheerful fire, and sit—

> "While glowing embers through the room,
> Taught light to counterfeit a gloom;"

and the gusty winter cry of the oyster man without, seemed to contend, as it were, with the wind; and when heard above the storm, made me hug myself the closer in the comforts of my cozy hearth? I am sure I should not; and I am equally aware that in proportion as I should have been dissatisfied with a different lot, ought I to be grateful for the fact that my lines have fallen to me in pleasant places, and that I am not engaged at this moment, like many who are not much worse, in unravelling the intricacies of old rope ends, more in compliance with an act of parliament than my own inclination.

After all, comparison and contrast are great consolers, reconcilers, and comforters. Go where you will, see what poverty and privation you like, and yet you will find a degree of misery below that, compared with which the

former almost rises into happiness. When I had taken my seat in the Chapel attached to the Bedminster Union Workhouse, and saw the old people totter in and occupy their places, I could not help saying to myself, What on earth can there be left in life for these poor people, to make them care for it? There are the young; they have hope and the prospect of better days; these four walls will not, in all probability, bound their sphere until they are borne out of them to a pauper's grave. But the old people —what have they to care for, what to interest them?— what a total vacancy they must endure. The very regularity and certainty with which their food is provided for them, by depriving them of all solicitude on that head, must increase the apathy of their dismal existence—

> "With lab'ring step
> To tread their former footsteps;
> Pace the round perpetual! to climb life's worn wheel,
> Which draws up nothing new; to beat and beat
> The beaten track; to bid each wretched day
> The former mock; to surfeit on the same,
> And yawn their joys, or thank a misery
> For change, though sad;—to see what they have seen;
> Hear, till unheard, the same old slabbered tale;
> To taste the tasted, and at each return
> Less tasteful."

—to walk the same walk, in the same yard, day after day, under the same shadow of the same great house; to sit on the same benches, at the same hour, and have the same dole weighed out to them; all this appeared to me the very height of miserable sameness.

In the evening, however, I passed through their sitting rooms; and there were the old men, each in his chair, telling his old tale; for though they rose as we entered the room, and ceased their gossip, yet we had hardly closed the door on the opposite side, when they relapsed back into their seats, and took up the thread of the "lang syne" tale where it was interrupted. Oh! benign consoler of old age art thou, good gossip! thou art the sole drop of earthly sweetness left these aged people; a cheap luxury art thou, always at command, and yet always delicious!

Through thee, even in a workhouse, can these old people form a little world of fire-side interest for themselves. The long years of labour, that appeared painful as they passed, are told over and talked back upon with something allied to pleasure; who they worked for, and where they worked; the succession they have seen of fathers and sons and grandsons, up in the great house, around and beneath which their poor cottages stood, and the comparative qualities and characters of each generation; these topics, to you, reader, and to me, perhaps, so tasteless, afford pleasure to them, and furnish moments when even the superannuated workhouse pauper is happy in his little kingdom of retrospect.

Nor is the workhouse gossip always confined to the rude hamlet history, or the poor and the monotonous reminiscences of past country toil. Now and again some aged offcast from the city and civilization is to be found in the semicircle of wrinkled faces, upon which the workhouse evening fire is reflected. This was the case at Ashton, to which I am now referring. One old man, with more character in his face and more refinement (if I may so speak,) about his head, was pointed out to me; and he certainly presented a manifest contrast to the clod-dish countenances of the aged agricultural labourers around him. He had been a waiter at the York House, Bath, and is evidently regarded with some deference by his poor co-inmates, who look upon him as the *old gentleman* of the workhouse. His, like their's, are the reminiscences of labour; but they are the reminiscences of labour amidst life and festivity; his are the stories of great banquets and grand balls and noble visitors, that enliven the dull tales of country drudgery: and no wonder, considering the contrast his grand experience of "lords and ladies gay" must present to the memorials of their own monotonous lives, that the agricultural inmates should regard his superior knowledge of men and things — of a kind of life of which, in their homely imaginations, they can have no conception—with deference and wonder. Thus, again I will say, benign gossip! art thou the solacer

and comforter of the old man. How much do I not owe thee myself! How many hours, otherwise dull, hast thou not enabled me to while away, as, Tam o'Shanter and Souter Johnny like, I and some venerable contemporary have sat down and enjoyed thee for an evening, each the other's story much, but his own more. When blood grows cold, and years, in their accumulated weight, hang heavily about our limbs, thou art given to us as the sole, harmless, hearty, genial, healthy pleasure which we have powers to enjoy. O! soothing genius of Gossip! I for one, at least, am grateful to thee.

But I was speaking of contrast as a great consoler and reconciler of man to his state, and even in a workhouse, where of all places there seems to be the greatest social equality—where all are fed alike, clothed alike, lodged alike—there is still a field for the exercise of this quality; and many an inmate may look around, and, comparing his lot with that of others, find occasion to congratulate himself on his comparative happiness. So at least, I fancy, the circumstance I am about to relate will show.

After passing through the sitting-rooms which I described, and which certainly were not then without their air of rude comfort and cheerfulness, the Master conducted me to the dormitories up stairs. It was then past five o'clock, and the falling evening began to fill the long empty rooms with thickening shadows, making the double lines of beds appear somewhat spectral in the gloom, and seeming as chilly in their rigid regularity, as if it were impossible that any body ever could be warm in them. As I followed the Master down the centre of those long drawn apartments, with a depressing sense of their dreariness, which was not at all diminished by our sounding footsteps and the deepening shadows, I noticed the coverlid of one of the beds move as I passed; and on looking again I saw it was occupied by an old man, the sole evening inmate of those long lonely rooms. When I thought of the crescent of faces around the fire below, which I had just seen, the utter desolation of this poor bed-ridden creature struck me as solitary and wretched in the extreme.

"That is a poor old huntsman, Sir," observed my friend Allies, on seeing me pause; "he was many years in the service of Mr. Assheton Smith; and having had his legs and arms broken by falls I don't know how often, now suffers dreadfully from rheumatism."

Unhappy remnant! thought I; so this is the fate of the old huntsman; break his bones, and then let him crawl to the door of the nearest poorhouse. The old hunter is better off; when his work is done, he is turned into a paddock; but the human animal, as soon as he is used up, is turned off to be gnawed by rheumatism until death divorces him from his suffering in a union workhouse. Some time ago I read of an inquest on an old huntsman of Sir John Smith's, who died of starvation in St. Philip's; so that after all one hears of the noble natures of fox-hunters, they seem to have rather an incomprehensible mode of displaying themselves.

The poor old huntsman turned round uneasily on his side, while an expression of pain contracted his features, and I could not help contrasting his appearance at that moment in my imagination with the joyous figure, in all the glory of scarlet and skull cap, with his bugle at his lips, and his dogs around him, he must have presented in the field ere now. I recollect reading in some story of an old huntsman dying, and his master and his fellow-roysterers rushing into the room and giving him a view halloo before he gasped his last. But there are other ways, as well as this, of showing a want of feeling for a worn-out servant. Had the old man been able to take his place with the pauper circle around the fire below, he would doubtless have added his "moving accidents by flood and field" to the general stock of gossip; but being in his lone bed in the long silent empty room at the house-top, he was the very picture of desolation and solitude.

The reader will doubtless perceive (as I do now myself for the first time) that I have not told him how I got to Bedminster Union Workhouse, or what brought me there, or how I came to stop for prayers in the paupers' abode,

when I intended to have gone on to Barrow Church. I cannot tell him; all I know is that the fancy passed my mind as I passed the gate, and I entered. There was a civil competition between the Master and Matron for me as soon as I crossed the threshold; worthy Mrs. Plumley at once threw open the doors of her side of the house, while my friend Allies, with the keys in his hand, looked imploringly on me from the other. I'll see all, thought I; and I did see all, though the Matron of course claimed the precedence. I need not hawk the reader with me through a workhouse, for if it afforded him or her as little pleasure in hearing about rooms full of young children or old women, as it did me in seeing them, the relation would certainly be worthless.

Human beings in the mass are ever uninteresting; it is only individual character that one cares to investigate. In the time of my old friend Mr. Porter, of St. John the Baptist, in Bristol, I recollect visiting with him the little Alms House over which he presided; and as the Rector was a shrewd and quaint investigator of character, he gave a sort of sketch of each old woman as he introduced me to her. "We are now, Sir," he would say, "in the St. John's College, and this," pointing to a talkative old crone, "is my Professor of Rhetoric;" and the crone, (for they all knew his humour) would immediately give him a specimen of her talents, by inveigling against him with a sort of semi-friendly invective. "And this, Sir," he'd continue, passing on and not minding her invective, "is my Professor of Political Economy," (the old woman, spectacle on nose, was trying to spell her way through a piece of an ancient newspaper,) and so on. Now we had none of these discursive sketches of character at Ashton; there was no alteration, but from dull old to dirty young faces, the same series of great square whitewashed walled rooms enclosing all. The only variety to my succession of views was a fine piece of beef, which was held up by an iron fork from the boiler by a woman in blue check, for my special inspection. I had a basket of bones too, "such as they crush at Andover," exhibited for my solemn contemplation.

When I entered the little Chapel, the paupers were already seated, the men at one side, the women at the other. From the manner in which the service was gone through, I assure you Dives might come here, and take a lesson in the decorum of public worship from Lazarus. There was the utmost attention; and in this congregation of paupers, and the appropriateness of many parts of the service to their peculiar position, I felt more than ever the all-comprehending, all-condition-reaching adaptation of our beautiful Liturgy. I noticed that it was with some very natural expression of self-pride the old people, who could read, put on their spectacles (the only personal property now left them,) and opened their books, and joined audibly in the responses. As ignorance is usually the companion of poverty, these of course were the exceptions, and they felt the little distinction, and it was felt by those around them. I was rather surprised to see amongst the faces turned towards me many that were marked by a strong expression of prudence and sense, qualities which ought to keep their possessors out of poor houses; but there are circumstances over which neither prudence nor good sense have control.

Notwithstanding the attention, however, of the congregation, and the impressive reading and discourse of the Chaplain, the Rev. Mr. Matthews, I felt throughout the service the want of a Church, and the softening associations which the ecclesiastical character of the building in which we worship conveys. A number of semi-prisoner-like paupers marched into a large room for prayers, and marched back again, had something of frigid formality and cold restraint about them, that strongly contrasted with the freedom of the poorest peasant coming of his own accord, through green lane and field, to the old Church of his poor forefathers. The new Poor Law worship was, in fact, I felt too modern and methodical a device for my old impressions.

The workhouse, as the reader is doubtless aware, has a school, but the good impressions conveyed therein, in the case of young girls at least, cannot be expected to be very permanent, so long as the practice prevails of taking them

thence and placing them at the washing tub, by the side of the worst and most abandoned of their own sex, exposed to the moral pollution to which they must be subject from such society. This pernicious arrangement is perpetuated on the grounds of economy. the ratepayers, or their representatives, preferring to keep the young girls in such pestilential company, to paying a few pounds to erect a separate apartment for them. The lepers of old were removed from the tabernacles of the healthy to a remote building set apart for them; and yet while contagion from the moral leper is still more imminent, the comparatively innocent and infected are crowded for a whole day together in the same room—on the grounds of economy. I have a great respect for the agricultural interest, but your farmer guardians are very often very hard handed administrators of money, and will fight more obstinately against the expenditure of a penny, when they have to pay it themselves, than a town mechanic would a shilling. I have, I repeat, a great respect for them; and I admire their hospitality in their own kitchens, and their heartiness on their own warm hearths, but they are, nevertheless, very often, in anything that concerns the outlay of current coin, to use a homely term, "dreadful screws." Whether it be to repair their old parish Church, or to make an improvement in a Poor-house, they are very hard to be moved to a liberal vote. I know they say they can't afford it; but if none of us were to give but what, according to our own notions of capacity, we can afford, God help the poor, or rather God help the rich, for such *prudence* would soon precipitate a crisis when the poor might help themselves. I think the Rev. Wm. Mirehouse is the chairman of the Bedminster Union, and to his attention I commend the circumstance I have just referred to. In most matters the reverend chairman has a way of doing what he likes; he certainly likes to have his way, and he generally has it ('tis a characteristic of the family). I wish, therefore, he would take it into his head to have some alteration made; for, if I could only induce him once to grow stubborn with the guardians, sooner or later I'd be bound he'd have the best of it and another building.

Redland Chapel.

Edmund Burke said, "Though I have the honour to represent Bristol, I should not like to live there, I should be obliged to be so much on my good behaviour." Now Bristol, to my mind, is a pleasant old place enough; and if my position entailed no greater inconvenience than being constrained to conduct myself within the ordinary and outward rules of decorum, I should not complain; but, from the limited society of the neighbourhood in which I live, my identity has become known to half-a-dozen elderly ladies, who, presuming on the possession of a secret which they deem of some importance, interest themselves in all my proceedings with an activity not to be damped or diverted.

Early on Sunday morning last, for instance, a servant called on me, with Miss ——'s compliments and kind regards, to say that as it had snowed and frozen very hard during the night, she hoped, unless John was frost-shod, I would not entrust myself or that amiable animal to the perils of a pilgrim's progress over slippery and insecure roads. There was something also said about a rib of beef, a dumpling, and a dinner at two, with a suitable duet and Pope's Dying Christian in the evening. I thanked Miss ——, took her advice, and declined her dinner; there being, however, no merit in either, inasmuch as I had previously made up my mind on the matter of visitation, and my own meal was purchased and prepared for the day.

But though it was not a morning to entrust a horse on a hard road, and one's self on the horse, it was just the weather, frosty, yet kindly, for short walk, in a pair of cork soles and a warm coat; so, with a ginger lozenge in either jaw, a reserve of that comfortable confection in my waistcoat pocket, and the warm flannel-lined flaps which

I have had appended to my hat, drawn down over my ears, I sallied forth for Redland; the white, crisp-like, glistening surface of the ground making me feel and fancy as though I were walking on a great wedding-cake. It was the first snow of the season; and the birds, as they flitted from tree to tree, disturbing the flakes, which fell from the branches at each light rebound, seemed rather amused than alarmed at the appearance of things. The boys of two schools which I met, each with a pair of red mittins and a red nose, talked largely of skating, and seemed so tickled at my appearance as I passed, that, were it not for the scanty supply of ammunition, and the purple-faced apparition of "the principal" at their heels, they would doubtless have saluted me with a platoon of snow-balls.

Redland Chapel is a small classical building, of comparatively modern date, and erected, as I have heard, by the munificence of some excellent lady and gentleman, (who have set up their own images inside,) for the accommodation of the small and select circle who inhabit the surrounding villas. It must have cost a considerable sum, for there is an amazing deal of expensive and minute work, especially on the inside; the altar, which is apsical in form, being actually encrusted with relief inlaid wood-carving of no common description. There is a large painting, which, for aught I know to the contrary, may be of considerable mark; and the lectern eagles and table are of bold design and richly gilt. The splayed interior bases of the windows are formed of slabs of fine marble; and around, upon every available point, are youthful and bodiless angels, in such numbers, indeed, that you would think a flock of cherubs had been originally let loose in the Church, and that, flitting about, they alighted singly or in clusters upon every jutty frieze and coigne of vantage, where they continue to the present day, pleased with the good sublunar society into which they have fallen. I think it was a notion of one of the Eastern sects, that to each person was given, on their coming into this world, an invisible winged attendant, who waited to carry them

back to Paradise when their mundane career was completed. Had the oriental fancy struck the founder of Redland Chapel, he could not have been more profuse of his cherubs; for I think there would be found, on a rigid computation, a little round head and a pair of pinions for every member of the select and highly respectable congregation under the care of the Rev. — Carrow. There they may be seen, clinging from and poised upon every projection, smiling in twos or threes from the tops of capitals on the old clerk below, or sadly ruminating on some empty pew, according as fancy seized the carver, and the little celestial countenance came from his chisel and graver. In two niches at the west end of the edifice are the busts of the founder and foundress before alluded to, the unfortunate monuments of a personal vanity, which mars all their munificence. When Alexander proposed to rebuild the Temple at Ephesus, provided he were allowed to place his own name over the porch, the worshippers of Diana, with a well turned compliment, declined his offer; and the pagans, in this point at least, might furnish us with a page from the "Book of Proprieties."

With all the carving and the gilding, however, of Redland Chapel, they seem to have omitted the table of commandments, which, according to canonical law, they ought to have inscribed in some ostensible part adjoining the altar. I have not very good sight, it is true; but I looked for them, and could not find them. I sometimes think I will steel my heart to great austerity and severity, and get up a prosecution, as I believe I have before threatened to do, through my Proctor, Daniel Burges, the younger, against the authorities of some three or four Churches where I have noticed the omission; and if once I begin proceedings, once enter the little dingy court which is poked up in a dark west corner of our Cathedral, nothing will mollify me out of my stern resolve,—not even a vestry dinner.

While yet some distance from the Church, I could see the great stove fire, which fronted the door, blazing

brightly within, and presenting a warm contrast to the frosty atmosphere without. There is a clerical friend of mine (rather high in his notions, I confess,) who is a great enemy to fires, stoves, and every kind of warming apparatus in Churches, because he says people ought not to require such indulgences during their devotions; this might do well enough for Captains Ross and Parry, and the members of the returned Arctic expedition, but I must beg to say, as an old man and an invalid, that I do not, even upon principle, object to the introduction of a little artificial heat into a Church on a cold December day.

And so the sexton seemed to think, for he placed me in a pew close to this same blazing stove which looked so cheerful from outside, and felt no less pleasant upon a nearer acquaintance.

A testy old man whom I knew, used always to say, when he heard it given out that the Church would be closed on the next Sunday or two for cleansing, that the parson wanted a holiday; he called it the "recreation device," and declared that it was not so much to sweep the cobwebs off the walls, as to blow the cobwebs off the clergyman by a sea-side breeze, that the practice was resorted to. Now I must say that if the Rev. R. Carrow should feel inclined to go from home for the next two Sundays, and close Redland Chapel for the purgatory process referred to, he could not be accused of any very wanton propensity for making clean; there is abundant work for brush and besom for a fortnight, not as to the seats, for they are clean enough; the highly respectable congregation take care of that, and very wisely see there is nothing to soil their silks and satins; that a particle of dust should cling to the coat tail of Mr. Justice W——, or trespass upon the broad cloth of a V——, is not to be thought of; but plenty of that commodity has settled upon the carving and cornices, and every other projection in the Church, and there is hardly one of the aforesaid angels without a dark deposit across his countenance, which gives rather a sinister expression to celestial faces that ought not to be found there.

I must say for Redland, that the best, the sweetest, and most solemn congregational singing I ever heard in any Church or Chapel, is to be heard there; the majority are female voices, and neither organ nor instrument of any kind, beyond a primitive pitch-pipe, aids the flowing and effective melody. I aspire to be a musician myself, that is, I affect the flute, but when I can have such singing without mechanical help, I willingly renounce all accompaniments, from the sackbut of past to the village grinder of present days.

If the Rev. R. Carrow would give himself a little more time, he would read the services as well as any clergyman in the Diocese; but really it was quite startling to hear the rate at which he commenced, and which made me think he had set his heart on completing the service, sermon and all, by noon. He soon after became more deliberate and measured, and read the lessons with elegance and feeling; but he frequently got into his flying style during the Liturgy, and once or twice literally *dashed* at the Lord's Prayer with an impetuosity perfectly surprising. The Vicar of Westbury is evidently an absent man; I could see this by his manner, if I had not heard numerous anecdotes illustrative of it, such as his beginning the marriage ceremony on some occasions for baptism, and taking up his position at the altar instead of the font, when about to christen a child; but as I have never been sponsor or principal at such times, I do not presume to vouch for the correctness of what has reached me traditionally; my informants, however, have always at the same time done justice to his kindness and clerical courtesy; though it has been his misfortune to have a larger parish than he can conveniently or well manage.

Whoever they are that charitably take care of the row of rosy faced little girls, in warm shawls and grey plaid gowns, that ranged themselves like so many winter pœonies round the altar, deserve much credit. The little things as they entered, respiring their thin vapoury breath on the frosty air, were the very pictures of youthful health and humble comfort.

The gentleman (a stranger) who preached, took for his text, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest;" a curious, but, if I may use the expression, a contradictory coincidence with the face of nature without; the fields were *white* (with snow,) but not to harvest; a season for which, I suppose, the sermon, which was an excellent and somewhat ambitious one, was originally composed. But when a man leaves home, and his portmanteau is not very large, he cannot travel furnished for the four seasons, or fully provided against the contingencies of weather.

Dundry.

Beattie begins his Minstrel, I think, by singing—

> "Oh! who can tell how hard it is to climb
> The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar;"

and Lord Bacon observes, in one of his Essays, "the rising into place is laborious;" while the experience of my ascent to "the Hill of Oaks" aptly illustrates both, and confirms by fact what has been advanced by fancy.

By a curious coincidence, I selected the very worst day for the very worst duty I ever undertook. During the spring, when I might have made my way through ranks of primroses, and in the summer, when violets and new mown hay scented the air, I saw Dundry Tower look down upon me from its sublime and serene eminence week after week, without my once wishing to turn John's head in that direction; yet on a Sunday morning, about a month ago, when it threatened to snow, and carried its threat into execution before I had gone a mile upon my journey, I was irresistibly moved to climb the summit where tradition says there was once a forest of oaks, though it is only earnest entreaty that will induce a few gooseberry bushes to abide there now.

It is pleasant enough to look out upon a snow storm through a window from a well warmed room, and see the flakes wheeled against the panes, or blown about in rude sport by the wind; but the picturesque ceases when you have to bide its peltings abroad yourself; so you may be sure I did not pause long on our neighbouring Pisgah to view the prospect, which on all sides was to me suggestive of premonitory symptoms, or a sharp attack, of rheumatism.

I believe all the winds that blow from the Channel alight for a moment on Dundry, to rest themselves before they continue their flight further inland; for, seemingly

taking the tower for their own Temple, they took as much liberty with it as if they paid the Church rates, producing all manner of musical sounds amongst its open parapets and pinnacles, and making one wonder that so much lightness and grace should still uplift its aerial fret-work, and still outlive the elemental war of centuries of winter days.

Not a face looked from the little handful of houses that, almost shivering in the blast, huddled, as it were, for shelter on this bleak summit, around the old walls of the Church. The few who had left their firesides for morning prayers were already within the sanctuary, from which I could hear now and again the sounds of worship, when the wind was not whistling through the headstones in the small churchyard.

Cold and vault-like is the *descent* into the Church through the west entrance under the tower; and hollow and vault-like it sounded as I shook the snow from my cork soles. A large bunch of keys, dangling from the inner door, announced my advent to the little congregation, who, as I entered, looked with manifest surprise upon me, as though they wondered from what point of heaven or earth a stranger could have been blown into their bleak region on such a day. Little did they dream of any man of my years being so inveterate a vagrant as to turn his back on a snug-cushioned pew in a city Church, heated by Hazard's patent, to climb the top of Dundry in the teeth of a snow-storm, for morning prayers. I have heard it maintained that Churches ought to be placed in the most remote and inconvenient situations, so that people should show their sincerity by overcoming difficulties in the way of duty; and this principle once admitted, I think I can claim superiority over those who, on the same morning, merely rode from their firesides to their family pews in flys and triple folds of broadcloth.

It was far from warm in the Church; yet, from the manner in which the wind howled about us, giving a good idea of the wild weather without, it felt a positive comfort to be within, and enabled me to form some notion of what

worshipping in the wilderness and backwoods might be like. Yet there were few parts of Bristol from which we, or rather the Church in which we met, were not at that moment visible, though, perhaps, none troubled themselves to think that the distant mountain sanctuary upon which they looked inclosed a little congregation, whose voices of praise were even then, on that bleak height, raised to the God who sends the snow and storm. I know that many a Sunday morning I have myself looked to that hill, standing like a screen between me and the horizon, and the tall-towered Church on its summit, without once associating with it the sacred thought that prayer and thanksgiving were then passing to Heaven from a primitive little congregation, assembled beneath the pointed roof and pinnacled steeple, which formed such prominent and picturesque objects in the landscape.

The worshippers were not many; but a little group of school children, nestling round the altar, mingling their voices in the responses, and singing prettily and pleasantly enough in the psalms, gave an air of interest and devotion to the service which, coupled with our sublime situation, its solitude, and the elemental war without, must have made a sensible impression on any stranger who, like me, had come as it were casually amongst them on this bleak morning.

When the clergyman ascended the pulpit, a comfortable old farmer left his seat, went and fastened the outer door, so as more effectually to exclude the snow blast, and returning once more to his pew, "snuggled up" into the corner, thrust his hands into his sleeves, and looking round complacently on his fellow-parishioners seemed to say, "Let us make ourselves as comfortable as we can for the sermon," which was a modest discourse, principally about the old year and the Philistines. Who the officiating minister was I cannot say, but I supposed him to be one of the Curates from Chew Magna, with which Dundry is united; he read well, seemed in happy frame of body and mind, and had large black whiskers; for the old year and the Philistines, whatever inroads they may have made

upon others and the children of Israel, appeared to have had little impression upon the smooth and cheerful surface of his outward man.

Dundry, like almost all Churches on the summit of high hills, is dedicated to St. Michael, as though our Popish ancestors meant to propitiate the Archangel on the point where he was likely to place his first alighting footstep upon earth; or, on leaving, to outspread his returning wings for a heaven-ward flight. The edifice itself is small, comprising nave, chancel, and north aisle; but the high tower, with its light and beautiful open parapet and pinnacles traced through every line with almost aerial effect against the sky, is the first feature about the building; and forms, from its height, one of the landmarks in the chart by which the mariner guides his course in the neighbouring channel. There is a kind of parish pun or tradition, that the architect who built it, previously erected Thornbury tower, and St. Stephen's, Bristol; and having completed his performances with this crowning feat, exclaimed in triumph, "Now I have *done dree*," (Dundry, or done three—the reader will himself please to pick the joke out of the story.)

There are few or no monuments of interest or importance; for I suppose the mailed gentry of by-gone centuries, who are to be found coffined in lead and effigied in stone in such abundance under chancel roof and canopied recess through our fine old English Churches, thought the air of Dundry too shrewd and nipping for their baronial bones or bodies. One, however, though no knight or squire's, struck me as modest in the extreme; it is in memory of William and Martha Jones, of Bishport. "She died March 3, 1749, aged 67. He died May 16, 1753, aged 81. He was a man of well known integrity, and whose natural abilities were so great that by them only he clearly comprehended the powers of the human mind; and, unaided by academical education, was able to refute with uncommon sagacity the slavish systems of usurped authority over the rights, the consciences, or the reason of mankind !!!!" Considering the very large family con-

nexion of the Joneses, it is not to be wondered at that I should be ignorant of the particular celebrity of this one; but if there be any inference to be drawn from mural monument, I should say that the one rejoicing in the name of William, erst residing at Bishport, and now resting in some vault beneath Dundry, was a Radical Reformer, who was enabled, "without academical education," to make a great row at parish meetings, was a Boanerges at open vestries, and thought it the height of "sagacity" to make other people as unhappy as himself, and as discontented with every institution and authority which his malapert ignorance could not understand or appreciate.

In the churchyard is an ancient cross in good preservation, and close by an old house designed by the Bishops of Bath and Wells as a residence for the minister, but converted into one for the poor.

Tortworth.

Tortworth is remarkable for two things—for being the site of a Spanish chesnut one thousand years old, and the seat of an English nobleman who has turned his back on the faith of his fathers. The tree sprang from a nut in the days of Egbert, and the earl from an alderman in the reign of King Charles. One of his lordship's ancestors had to purify himself from attainder in the time of the Great Rebellion; and his successors seem never since to have recovered their affection for Church and King.

The Church, which is a fine old structure, stands close by the ancient mansion, in the midst of a noble and lordly park, and in picturesque proximity to the venerable tree referred to; but it is not his lordship's place of worship, nor is his lordship willing that it should be the place of worship of any one upon whom his lordship can exercise an influence. Not far from the family seat, and on an eminence called Mount Pleasant, is a Dissenting Chapel; and to this, as I passed, people, principally his lordship's tenants, were crowding, the earl and his countess being amongst the congregation, for the purpose of watching and praying, as some witty person in the neighbourhood used to say—to watch for their dependents and pray for themselves; for the earl expects a sort of feudal followership in matters of faith as well as territorial tenure.

I should have guessed, by the gloomy and severe expression of the people's faces as they passed me, that they were not answering the cheerful Sabbath summons of the old Church chimes. I would not be understood to say, that a look of levity and frivolity becomes either the day or the duty; but the jealousy with which some classes of nonconformists watch over their natural spirits, the rigour with which they shut out the pleasant light of day from the chamber of their hearts, and keep it in constant gloom

and shadow, as if a smile would peril their salvation, and the enjoyment of a cheerful sunbeam upon earth would have the effect of shutting them out for ever from the light of heaven, is nothing short of a spiritual hypochondriacism—the effect and emanation of an excessive morbidity, which disturbs and darkens every view which they take of themselves and others. Theirs seem a religion less of grateful obedience than of sullen restraint. Meet them in the world, and they are unsmiling, silent, and seem unhappy; hear them in their houses of worship, and you only hope, for their own sakes, that their constant confessions of vileness are rather the result of an extravagant fashion of speech than a real representation of feeling, which is, I believe, not only the most charitable, but the most correct view of the case; for, as Southey says in his Life of Cromwell, "The language of an evangelical professor concerning his own sins, and the sense of his own wickedness, is no more to be taken literally than that of an amorous sonnetteer who complains of flames and torments."

As I walked down through the park, and saw the light through the pierced stone parapets of the grey Church tower, the old mansion close by, and the whole belted and bosomed amidst tall ancestral trees, which had the better effect from the fine sweep of glade that opened out in front of them, I was not disposed to envy the feelings of the nobleman who could not only, Sunday morning after Sunday morning, turn his back on such a truly English scene, with the bells sounding in his ears, but thwart its appointed minister at every turn, and, as it were, place a bar between his tenants and their hereditary house of worship.

I no sooner entered the Church than, in the dwindled congregation, consisting of some dozen persons, I could trace the discountenance of the lord of the soil: there was the great canopied pew where the Moretons had sat, many a generation of them, empty now; the only members of that race who still continued constant to the Church being such of them as were packed up in lead in the vaults

below the pavement. The present Incumbent of Tortworth is a Mr. Gresley, a great scholar, and of a family of great scholars, there being three brothers of them who were a sort of Horatii or Curatii race for hard reading and high honors at Oxford—a clergyman who seems desirous and willing to do his duty, if he were permitted by his powerful neighbour. When I knew Tortworth, however, some years ago, Dr. Cooke was the Vicar; and the fact is the more impressed upon my mind by a circumstance which occurred there on that Sunday afternoon, and which is possibly still in the recollection of some of the "oldest inhabitants." The doctor was emphatically of the "old school," and was not always rigidly regular in his time of attendance; he did not, as Napoleon said of the Austrians when they failed in an important movement at the battle of Rivoli, by being a little too late, "*understand the value of minutes.*" On this occasion, however, he was considerably behind time, and the congregation were kept lounging about the churchyard, until Tratman, the old clerk, tired of gossipping with the flock and waiting for the shepherd, stretched himself full-length upon a tombstone, and it being a very sultry summer day, fell fast asleep beneath the shade of an old tree, and above the body of some one whose slumbers were less temporary than his own. In the mean time the doctor made his appearance; and as he bustled through the gate, (for people are "never in a greater hurry than when they make haste to be behind,") discovered his humble colleague, dreaming, perhaps, of a tithe modus or the time of King Egbert, when the old chesnut was planted; so by way of punishing him, (the doctor never thought of punishing himself, who was the real delinquent,) he left the old clerk in undisturbed possession of his tombstone, and quickly proceeding to the reading-desk, began the service without his assistance. Whether Tratman met with a similar interruption to his *siesta* that Tophet did, I cannot say; but some ten minutes after he rose, rubbed his eyes, and was more astonished than frightened to find that he was in undisputed possession of the churchyard, and that the people had gone into

Church. He, however, determined the parish should know that he was not the only person at fault; so, hurrying into his seat and after saying "Amen" at the end of the prayer, he went and boldly and briskly "tanged" the bell for a minute or two, and then composedly returned to his seat. This disconcerted and displeased the doctor exceedingly, and service terminated, he remonstrated with him sharply for this unseasonable bell-ringing; when the clerk wickedly replied, with reference to the Vicar's late appearance, "Lord, sir, did you ever know, in the whole course of your life, a service performed without the bell being tolled to tell the people the parson *was in* Church?" But Tratman indulged in the familiarity of an old servant with his master, and there was a sort of Dean-Swift-and-his-man freedom of manner between them; for on another occasion, when the doctor, who, when grown old, was not always the most certain in his performance of the service, was beginning to read the wrong collect, the clerk very audibily interrupted him by saying, "Wrong collect, Dr. Cooke!" "'Tis the right one, Tratman," testily returned the doctor. "I know it yern't though," returned Thomas, naming, at the same time, the right one.

Poor Doctor Cooke, he certainly was a specimen of the take-it-quietly country parson, in which this district of Gloucestershire was not at all deficient; for while my friend Dr. Davis, of Stone, loved nothing better than to play the justice of peace, and preside at a good game prosecution; and Mr. Jones, of Charfield, delighted in a good day's run with a southerly wind and a close-lying scent; Dr. Cooke's ambition was less active, and did not go beyond his ease and a quarter of a buck from any of his noble neighbours.

I said incidentally that the congregation consisted of some dozen persons; there might have been a dozen and a half, but I do not think there were more; and the Church being large and lofty, the scant attendance appeared still more remarkable. Had this arisen from neglect or indifference on the part of the clergyman, there would be much to deplore in the circumstance; but from

what I can learn, there is no one more earnestly desirous to feel and see around him the evidence of his usefulness as a parish priest than the present Incumbent, who would be gratified to find his Church filled, and work hard to fill it; but when a powerful nobleman, the hereditary owner of the whole parish, able and only too ready to command the obedience of his tenants, makes it a point to throw his weight, influence, and example, into the side of Dissent, and against the parish Church and the parish clergyman, it is not much to be wondered at that, while the Dissenting Chapel is full, the ancient place of Established worship is comparatively deserted. If I am rightly informed, Mr. Gresley endeavoured to establish a Church school, but of course the children of my lord's tenants could not go there, especially as my lord had one, under sectarian auspices, erected, for the more picturesque effect doubtless, nearly in front of the parsonage, with the Earl's arms, the *ramping* unicorns, carved in freestone, over each window. Besides, there are emissaries, lecturers, and readers, dispersed through this and the neighbouring parishes, by the indefatigable Earl and his colleague Colonel Kingscote, to, as it were, countermine the clergy in their own district. These "missionaries" were authenticated by a Rev. Mr. Cornwall, a clergyman from another part of the country, but who, on the remonstrance of the Bishop, to whom representation of the fact was made, ceased to be any longer "Examining Chaplain" to the noble Earl and the gallant Colonel in question. Both were indignant, and very recently, I believe, called at the palace at Stapleton, in order to try and bully the Prelate out of his purpose; but James Henry, on this occasion, grasped his crozier firmly in his hand, and parried both the Earl's mace and the Colonel's sword, until, seeing further efforts useless, they gave up the contest, and retreated to their carriage in dudgeon.

Now, as I said before, when a powerful nobleman takes part on his own paternal acres against the parish clergyman, and upholds and advances Dissent by his aid, influence, and example, the ordinary chances are all against

the former, who finds his parochial authority cribbed and cabined, confined, kept in almost to his own household; still I question if the present Incumbent be the best man to work such a parish, under such circumstances. A conscientious and painstaking clergyman he undoubtedly is, but he wants those attractive qualities—I dislike the word, but still I am driven to use it—those more popular characteristics which, however they may be dispensed with elsewhere, are necessary to a clergyman who would hold his own in a parish so overrun with Dissent. When an Earl and a Countess are amongst the congregation, and loud singing, and extatic praying, and energetic preaching are all going on in the new Dissenting Chapel on the hill, the service must not be allowed to seem too cold, or dry, or formal down in the old grey Church in the hollow. And yet this, I confess, was the kind of impression it left upon me; Mr. Gresley, with motives we must appreciate and respect, wishing to make the congregation respond, has seemingly dispensed with a clerk; but the people do not respond, or do so in so faint and inaudible a manner, that the priest's sentences are each followed by an interval of what some one called "muttered silence," which makes it seem only half a service. Then there was no singing in the morning, though there is in the afternoon, when the Stone choir attend and are paid, I believe, by Mr. Gresley, which shows that if he could procure psalmody in his own parish, and Mount Pleasant, and Earl Ducie, and Mr. Dove, did not occupy all the musical talent, there would be no defect in this respect. There is an organ, which had the suspicious appearance of a grinder, in the little west gallery, but it was silent; so that though the service was not slurred over, and the sermon was sound, and the clergyman paid strict attention to all those forms which high churchmen deem important and low not, I could understand how to some the whole might seem to want warmth and vitality.

Mr. Gresley looks what he is, a great scholar, a bookish man; one of a family of high repute in the Colleges and Halls of Oxford for the prowess with which they scaled

"the forked Olympian height" of the double first class, for the steadiness with which, as Curran said, "they made their eagle flight against the blaze of every science with an eye that never winked, and a wing that never tired." Yet, while one cannot but feel a pride in meeting ever and anon in a simple country Church, amid a simple people, some mighty scholar, whose learning is allowed amongst the learned to be great; yet such men, one cannot help thinking, are for the most part found to be better suited for the college and the closet than the country parish, for there is a knowledge necessary for the latter paramount to even the knowledge of books; a knowledge of the hearts and businesses of men; a knowledge of life, as well its common places as its passions; a knowledge, too, which great students, with all their hoarded-up erudition, their store-houses full of the lore of antiquity, do not always abound in. To be sure we have seen both combined in some cases, but these cases are not the majority. The severe and successful student, accustomed for years to the scholastic atmosphere, the contemplation of his cloistered retreat, (at once the scene of his triumphs and existence) must necessarily be but imperfectly prepared for an acquaintance with the active duties of parochial life, and can have had but little discipline in the address, the aptitude, to the world's information, which are necessary to form the effective country clergyman. Under more favourable circumstances were the Incumbent of Tortworth, instead of being thwarted by a pertinacious and sectarian Earl, supported as he should be by the lord of the soil, the thoughtful student and his parishioners would doubtless go on contented and happy, the former in his unworldly bookishness would do his best for their advantage, as he has always endeavoured to do, and the latter would respect the simplicity and singleness of the great scholar, "learned in all ages but his own;" while the fine old grey Church and the older chesnut, which flourished a great tree when the masons, and carpenters, and plumbers first assembled to raise this grey Church; and the parsonage and the outspreading park would altogether

present the picture of an English rural parish seldom surpassed.

There is in the parsonage a fine old library, which was given it I believe more than a century ago, and has seen many a Vicar in and out of the house; whether my friend Dr. Cooke ever disturbed those dusty shelves,

> "Where, saved by spice, like mummies, many a-year,
> Dry bodies of Divinity appear,"

I cannot venture to say upon my own authority; but it is just the apartment where I should expect to find such a man as the present Incumbent many a morning and evening, disinterring from those old coffin-like wood-bound folios the quaint remains of men as studious as himself, and who possibly produced those great books in remote country parsonages like that in which they now found an asylum.

The man who founded this library was a character to be venerated, and I hope his bones rest beneath some fine old canopied recess in some fine old Church; for I delight in the look of those glorious old folios (though I should not like to be obliged to read them through): "there were giants in the earth," indeed, when they were written and printed, and who took them between their huge finger and thumb as we, their puny posterity, would a pigmy duodecimo. With what contempt a Caxton and Wynkyn de Woed would look upon the dwarfish though decorated publishing of the present day; even John Murray's genteel quartos would meet with little favour in their eyes; and as for the mawkish sentimentality of my friend Burns's pictured books with old English titles for full-grown children, these great fathers of typography would not condescend to look at them. No, give them and me an armfull of a folio—something to make a man

> "Sweat and groan beneath a weary burthen,"

as he removes it from its shelf—"round-of-beef" sort of books, on which you may cut and come again for months, nay years, without seeming to make an impression upon

their solid contents. I have sometimes thought that if I were a hermit or an anchorite, I would have one of those great tomes to read out of, to eat off of—to be my teacher and my table in life, and to serve as a tombstone for me in death, with an appropriate inscription to inform posterity that beneath this volume were deposited the remains —say of the *Venerable Archdeacon* Bede if you please.

"Sweet" is a puling word, yet it is as sweet a landscape as ever you saw is that Church, with the old mansion by it, and both lying in the midst of a great park, and bounded by a romantic rivulet called Avon, with its still more romantic walks; just a scene in which to read and ramble one's noon-day life away. The interior of the Church is not in good repair, for the clergyman dare not propose a rate to Earl Ducie, whose ancestors and the sacred building within which they are buried keep mouldering away with equal rapidity. I believe one of his lordship's progenitors parted with the living to Oriel College for a consideration; but this is no reason why, because the patronage lapsed from the family, the family Church should literally *lapse* also. It consists of a main and south aisle and chancel; the south wall is covered with mourning hatchments of the house of Ducie; and one sees on that side nothing but crowing cocks and kicking unicorns, out of number and nature.

On coming out of Church I requested one of the congregation to direct me to the old chesnut, which I had never before seen; and by his instructions I had little difficulty in discovering that venerable patriarch of the park, compared with which the gnarled oaks around, and all the trees in England, are but upstarts and saplings. The moment you look at it, you feel its extreme age in the dark decaying but still germinating mass, seventeen yards in circumference, and looking like a tree which had put forth and shed its leaves in Saxon, Danish, and Norman dynasties, which had bowed its own head in a thousand winters, and seen nearly sixty crowned British heads bowed to the dust during that time. I do not speak now of an unknown tenant of the forest; "the great chesnut of

Tortworth" has had many a chronicler. It is called by this title in a boundary description in the reign of King Stephen. Evelyn makes distinguished mention of it; Gilpin has a drawing of it, I think; and a cut and account of it are in one of the recent editions of Shakspere, while no country historian passes by without paying respect and raising his hat to its venerable form. I have heard something too about the Runnemede Barons having a refection beneath, and their chesnuts from its branches, while more than one royal dessert had been supplied from this source, William the Conqueror himself having probably partaken of its fruit. It has, however, given up bearing for some years; but as I like roast chesnuts, and boiled better, (you may depend upon it, to boil them for twenty minutes, and place them for five more in a Dutch oven, is the best way to dress them), if it ever again should put forth fruit I hope Earl Ducie will send me a basket of them, as they are said, though small, to be sweet.*

While in conversation with a person on my way home, and from whom I elicited some of the circumstances I have already related, I learned that his lordship's religious opinions and tenets are not merely of sectarian but eccen-

* The following account of this great tree is from the *Gentlemen's Magazine* for 1762:—"This eminent tree is the property of the Rt. Hon. Lord Dacre, at Tortworth, alias Tamworth, Gloucestershire. I may with reason fix its rising from the nut in the reign of King Egbert, anno 800. From this date, to attain to such maturity and magnitude, as to be a signal tree, for a boundary or landmark, called by way of distinction the great chesnut tree of Tamworth, in the reign of King Stephen, I cannot allow less age than 335 years, which brings it down to the first year of King Stephen, anno 1135; from this date, we are certain of its age by record to the present year 1762; 627 years. In all 962 years. Mr. Evelyn, in his fifth edition, has this remarkable passage relating to this tree, viz. Boundaries to great parishes and gentlemen's estates: famous for which is that great chesnut at Tamworth, in Gloucestershire, which has continued a signal boundary to that manor in King Stephen's time, as it stands on record. See Lib. iii. Cap. 7th and 8th. If any regard is to be paid to the three periods given to oak and chesnut, viz. 300 years growing, 300 years standing, and 300 years decaying, it favours my conjecture, that this stately old chesnut tree is very little less, possibly more, than a thousand years old; and yet such vigour remains, it bare nuts anno 1759; from them young trees are raised."

tric character; and that he mixes up animal magnetism and nonconformity in most admired disorder; the "mesmerising girl," from London, and a great Dissenting Minister from the metropolis, being at the same moment honored guests at the Court; while his lordship, not content with such insight into a future state as is to be obtained through the broad road of the Bible, with a morbid curiosity not inconsistent with his character, pushes his researches into secret things through the devious path of this dubious agency, making, as it were, in his spiritual system the arts of Pharaoh's magicians harmonize with the miracles of Moses.

Whitchurch.

At Hengrove, on the confines of Bedminster and Whitchurch, is an old boundary stone between both parishes. Here, in my recollection, when the parochial authorities made their stated perambulations, the procession used to halt, and, uncovering their heads, sing the Old Hundredth Psalm; after which they drank each a glass of wine or ale, provided out of the parish funds, at a time when people were not such calculators and economists as they are now. Hengrove lies in the lap of a rich and soft vale, from which the wooded hills swell out on either side; so that the body of perambulators, as they grouped round the old moss-grown stone, and the breeze bore their mingled and mellowed voices along, seemed like a little band of early Christians, who had betaken themselves to the fields to worship the God of their fathers, away from the persecutions of their fellow men; and to this effect the clergyman in his cassock, giving out the well-known words, contributed not a trifle. There still stands the stone, at least it stood there on Sunday; but years have passed since the Old Hundredth was sung around it, and many more will have rolled by ere it be heard there again; a public dole of wine and ale are still more improbable, and as to the likeness of the population to early or late Christians either, I fear it grows daily more indistinct.

Whitchurch is not so called, as it is commonly supposed, from the colour of the Church, though the parish authorities, in their literal notions of philology, frequently new lime-wash the fabric, in order to preserve the fitness of names and things; but one Whyte, an Englishman by birth, and a saint by profession, (to take a liberty with the epigrammatic phrase of Voltaire, in "The Pupil of Nature,") had a cell on the site of the present building, where he spent his days in eating pulse, and his nights in

saying prayers; and thus handed down his name to the place, and it would seem to posterity also, unless the numerous families of Whites, who now flourish everywhere, had some other founder.

I and a young man with whom I fell into company on the road, arrived in Whitchurch contemporaneously with a little pony carriage, in which was the Curate, who resides at Brislington, the Rector being the Rev. Mr. Blackburn, of Ashton. Fortunately the clerk is a resident, and thus saves the Church the discredit of being alone represented in its locality by that diligent and subterraneous officer, the grave-digger. Selden, in his Discourses, tells us an anecdote that "the young Masters of Arts preached against non-residence in the University; whereupon the Heads made an order that no man should meddle with anything but what was in the text. The next day one preached upon these words, *Abraham begat Isaac;* when he had gone a good way, at last he observed that Abraham was resident, for, if he had been non-resident, he could never have begat Isaac, and so fell foul upon the non-residents." It is not necessary, however, to go back to the patriarchs for a proof of the propriety of a clergyman living amongst the people to whose welfare he has to attend: Lord Eldon said a man should not shear a flock he did not feed; and it is equally true that the shepherd ought not to live two miles from the fold. Mr. Astley could not, I was told, get a house nearer than Brislington; but in this age of artificers, when stone and mortar and masons (when they don't strike) may be had in abundance, the argument is by no means an unanswerable one; the Rev. Mr. Blackburn, the Rector, or Sir John Smith, the patron, if they put their shoulders to the wheel, or their pens to paper, could have a pretty little parsonage (with both sorts of water, and a day or night nursery if you like) standing by the Church before midsummer.

Were it not for its unfortunate white hue, the latter would have a quiet and rustic character. I had some fifteen minutes to spare before service, so I devoted two of them to watching the overseer nailing up a list of the

newly-elected Guardians of the Keynsham Union against the Church door with its own key, and without, I'll be bound, the consent of the claviger; having completed this job, and secured with the same ingenious substitute a second notice, informing all concerned that the magistrates had granted a rate of three pence in the pound, he went his way before I could tell him that in flagrantly breaking the Fourth Commandment with the Church key, he was doubly outraging the Decalogue. Without being animated by a persecuting spirit, I should like to have fined him, for it could have been nothing but sheer laziness that made Mr. Luce defer this piece of labour (which he might have done any day in the week) until the congregation were collected in the churchyard for prayers.

Whitchurch, which is dedicated to St. Nicholas, formerly, and indeed up to the time of the dissolution, belonged to Keynsham Abbey; and in a little ancient chauntry or chapel, on the north of the building, and forming a sort of transept on that side, an obit was observed for one Thomas Gay, who was the steward and treasurer of that monastery in 1422. The chauntry is now converted into a vestry: when I looked in a nice sea-coal fire was blazing in a stove grate, and doubtless contributed to keep the remains of Thomas Gay comfortable: the last Oxford Calendar hung over the fireplace for his information, and a mahogany table, on which were a gown and a pair of bands, duly laid out for Sunday adoption, rested its four thin legs on his tombstone; so that if the Reformation deprived the worthy treasurer of the benefit of posthumous prayers, it has made him no inconsiderable remuneration in the shape of physical comforts and domestic convenience. The old clerk, who was ringing the bell close by, and to whom I applied for more information, could only tell me that the said Thomas was some sort of a general of some sort of an order.

Besides this chauntry the Church consists of a nave and south aisle; in the latter is a gallery erected, as a large painted board informs the congregation, by Miss Sarah Whippie for the boys and girls of the school; and

at the west end is another, occupied by the choir. In front of the west fixture, and one of the most conspicuous objects in the Church, was a large brush, called, I believe, a Pope's Head, for cleaning the ceilings, &c.; from which circumstance I conclude they somtimes

"Sweep their halls,
And brush a web or two from off their walls;"

but it would be as well, when they have done with the "Pope's Head," that they put it away out of sight; for, to say nothing of the impropriety of all papal exhibitions in these red hot Protestant days, the less one sees of such domestic articles in a sacred edifice—the less there is under its solemn roof to recall one's thoughts to common life—the better. It is an offence to the eye, and distracts meditation.

From the board of benefactions in the south aisle, I made the following extract:—

"Mr. William Opie, sometime (?) Sheriff of Bristol, gave to this parish three pounds, fourteen shillings, yearly, for the preaching a sermon in this Church once a fortnight on Sunday."

In Sir William Opie's time the price current of good orthodox discourses must have been considerably under what it is at present. If I do not miscalculate, this is at about the rate of 2*s.* 10*d.* and a fraction the sermon, for which half-a-guinea is now given by all but the Vicar of ——, whose tariff does not greatly exceed that of the sometime Sheriff of Bristol, and whose settlements are never made in a violent hurry. There is a clerical story current of his having called on a brother clergyman some short time ago, to settle a long standing account of this kind, but the rates which he put down were so unusual—so under every thing that one is in the habit of seeing paid—that the reverend creditor refused to receive the sum, and expressed himself as candidly as to the other's notions of remuneration as courtesy would permit, leaving it to his option either to pay what was right, or not pay at all. The result was, the owing party left with the money

in his pocket, the owed allowing him to quit the study without any very cordial valediction. The former, however, had not gone more than a minute, when a tap was heard at the study door, and in the imperturbable Vicar thrust his massive head once more. "Mr. ——," said he, as if they had just parted with a fraternal embrace, "will you oblige me with a penny, for otherwise I will have to give the boy silver for holding my horse." It struck me, the other day, that the Vicar's rate of remuneration must have been copied from Whitchurch benefaction board.

I and my young companion had taken up a seat on a tombstone in the churchyard, by the row of poplars, awaiting the appearance of the Curate, when we were discovered by a comfortable-looking gentleman, who, from at first apparently eyeing us as suspicious characters, soon changed his mind; and, thinking we might be trusted, came up and accosted us. I was preparing to thank him, and tell him (thinking he had some hospitable intentions against our appetites) we had already breakfasted, when he invited us to inspect the school—a neat little Gothic building, close by the gate, and erected at the expense and in the life-time of Miss Sarah Whippe, who, it will be recollected, was recently and just before her death a considerable benefactress to the Bristol Infirmary.—A little tablet over the door-way simply records the fact—the date and the name of the philanthropic spinster by whom it was built; unlike a mural memorial over another educational charity in Gloucestershire—to avoid mistakes, I mean Henbury, where a slab on the school-house informs the traveller, or did at least a year or two ago, when I last visited this village, that the institution was founded by, I think, Anthony Edwards, (plain Anthony Edwards) in the year 1623, and repaired or rebuilt in the Churchwardenship of —— (I forget the Christian name) "*Stock, Esq.*," whose merit in having administered sundry Church funds, far outshines, certainly on freestone, the original desert of modest Mr. Anthony, who *merely* established and endowed the school!—that's all. It was a great

mercy and condescension to his memory that —— Stock, Esq., did not push his off the tablet altogether, and stand alone in the glory of undisputed capitals and undivided fame. But Henbury is a great place for second-hand charity, or at least the reputation resulting from it; it is a kind of moonshiny parish, where, like that planet, people sometimes beam in the borrowed light of a vicarious benevolence.

A troop of little boys and girls, headed by the Curate, were issuing out of the school-room for Church as I entered; and as I noted their chubby, comfortable little faces, I could not help saying, as each made her curtsey, or pulled his forelock at me, let no one reproach elderly maidenhood or venerable celibacy on the part of either sex again; see what the spinster, Sarah Whippie, has done, and what she never would probably have performed had she died a Mistress Smith or a Mistress Brown, and left a number of little common-place Smiths or Browns, each with a mouth to be filled and a back to be clothed, behind her. "Certainly," says Bacon, in one of his short essays, "the best works and of greatest merit, for the public, have proceeded from the unmarried or childish men, which, both in affection and means, have married and endowed the public." And again—"A single life doth well with Churchmen, for charity will hardly water the ground when it must first fill a pool." And the same thing may be predicted of unmarried females and church-women; Sarah Whippie's charity would hardly have furnished the additional wards of the Bristol Infirmary, or built Whitchurch School-house, had it to first fill a number of little pools in the shape of some dozen small Whippies. Let us therefore hear nothing more in the form of reproach about old maids and old bachelors, for (albeit it is I that say it, that ought not to say it) they have been in all ages the most useful members of society. I do not in this allude to myself, though had I

> "My unhouselled free condition
> Put into circumspection and confine."

some twenty or thirty years ago, instead of being an innocent pilgrim amongst the rural districts now, I should have to attend in my own parish pew with undeviating precision, and to find out the lessons every Sunday, perhaps, for seven in family, to say nothing of the numerous Chapels of Ease, which I may yet be able to build with a little economy and care, and which it would then be out of my power, consistent with my duty, to create.

Until last Sunday I had not been at Whitchurch since old parson Creech's time; that most deserving but very drowsy man used to ride out from Clifton, where he resided, (the air of the place seems friendly to non-residence) and dine with Mr. Whippie, who, I think, was churchwarden, between services, which took place, the morning at eleven, and the afternoon some time between three and half-past, according to the length of the parson's nap. About fifty years ago John Collinson, the Historian of Somersetshire and Antiquarian, was Rector of Whitchurch, where he spent most of his time in the profitable study of old tomb stones. I have heard my father say he had seen him both at Whitchurch and elsewhere with a brush and a vessel of water, washing out a date with as much diligence as if a fortune depended upon it.

The present Curate (Mr. Astley) is an admirable reader. I do not think I ever heard the first lesson so well read before—impressively and judiciously, but without effort or display. And what a sublime first lesson, by the way, last Sunday's was: there are no chapters of the Bible, perhaps, which abound more in important prophecies, delivered with all the poetry and grandeur of inspiration. I do not presume to rank that of expositor or annotator amongst my callings; but I will say that, familiar as the 24th chapter of Numbers has been to me, I heard it read on Sunday last with a new throb of feeling — the almost involuntary circumstances under which Balaam, the son of Beor, and he "whose eyes were open," uttered his parables; and the splendid exuberance and irresistible power with which they gushed forth, like as if from a great fountain, despite the expostulations of the

chagrined and disappointed Balak interposed to stop them —are replete with a soul-stirring interest and beauty no repetition can impair. Take, for instance, that glorious outburst when, from the top of Peor and the prepared altars, the recreant and disobedient prophet, as I may call him, "saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes," and the Spirit of God came upon him; and in a rapture he could not help, exclaiming, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth as gardens by the river side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord had planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters." And then when Balak tells him to flee to his place, with what an eye of prophecy does he look forward as if from that eminence into futurity—taking a last glance, as it were, into what was to come before he decended from the summit of Peor, and foretelling what that people should do unto Balak's people in the latter days; predicting not merely the downfall of the neighbouring nations, but the distant events of the great advent of Christ. "I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh; there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Seth;" and in conclusion, as if God would constrain him to complete the full measure of prophecy with which he had filled him, before his death, which was so near at hand, he foretells, with a rapid, a clear, and comprehensive glance, the fate of the enemies of Israel around, for centuries to come—recapitulating them in panoramic review from Peor—the downfall of Amalek, the destruction of the Kenite, strong and confident as he was in his dwelling-place and his nest in a rock—the victorious Asshur vanquished itself in turn, and Eber afflicted by the ships of Chittim, and perishing for ever. One thing in this chapter has particularly struck me, and perhaps has others also, and that is the moderation of Balak; disappointed and sore vexed as he is with Balaam for having altogether blessed those enemies whom he sent for him to curse, he yet allows him to depart unharmed

and unmolested, with this single complaint, "I thought to promote thee to great honour, but lo! the Lord hath kept thee back from honour." Pagan and all as Balak was, some of the "Christian" sects of the present day might learn a lesson of liberality from him; for I think if Balaam had so gone against the wishes of some of the representatives of Rome or Geneva, he would not have got off as easily. He certainly got better out of Balak's hands than Michael Servetus did out of John Calvin's, or Jerome of Prague out of the Council of Constance.

The parish choir is not above all praise, nor in sooth equal to any; there is a loud, pertinacious, self-confident clarionet, or oboe, or whatever they call it, which screeches over everything, and completely bullies down the little attempt at vocalization which two or three elderly men are disposed to make. In Miss Whippie's gallery, close by, amongst the little human pipes of the parish children, there are some forty or fifty far better musical instruments than that spoiled, clamorous, and monopolizing clarionet, if they would only set them to work; but they seemed to me not to open their mouths, and as if only ranged there to be, as it were, so many mute monuments in rustic bonnets, baragon jackets, and brown stuff, to the benevolence of the respected spinster in question.

Still the service, even with this drawback, was solemn and impressive; for there is that in the beautiful liturgy of our Church, which, when properly and decorously read, (as it was here,) be the building and the people ever so rude and simple, imparts dignity and solemnity to both. However plain and unpretending all the surrounding circumstances, the prayers of the Church being no extemporaneous effusion of the officiating minister, are subject to no chance or debasement from the inequalities of human intellect, but breathe the same simple grandeur, the same lofty piety in the least or rudest parish Church, and the proudest Cathedral pile; they are, like the Great Being to whom they are directed, no respecter of persons, but in their severe and uncompromising holiness, their impartial universality, make the same contrite confessions,

and offer up the same earnest petitions for the peasant flock of the remotest parish in Somersetshire, and for the courtly congregation of the royal Chapel of Windsor. The complacent Dissenter may mould his chance prayers to a casual grand visitor, and flatters from his knees, as he has sometimes been known to do; but though the sermon may be made to take any turn, the prayers of the Church, in their unbending dignity, lower their tone to no human worshipper, but are to all the same, simple, solemn, and unalterable.

The sermon was sensible and practical, but had not sufficient to distinguish it from the majority of sermons to require special notice. "Of all kinds of writing and discourse," says the late John Foster in his journal:—

"That appears to me incomparably the best which is distinguished by grand masses and prominent bulks; which stand out in magnitude from the tame groundwork, and impel the mind by a succession of *separate strong impulses*, rather than a continuity of agreeable sentiment. One has read and heard very sensible discourses, which resemble a plain, handsome, brick wall. All looks very well; 'tis regularly built, high, &c.; but 'tis all alike—'tis flat. You go on and on, and notice no one part more than another; each individual brick is nothing, and you pass along, and soon forget utterly the wall itself. Give me, on the contrary, a style of writing and discourse that shall resemble a wall that has the striking irregularity of pilasters, pictures, niches, and statues."

Mr. Astley's was one of the brick-wall kind; plain and regular enough, but still a brick wall.

On leaving the Church, the same good-natured gentleman who showed us the school invited me and my young friend to dinner—a courtesy which we were reluctantly compelled to decline, but which I chronicle in order to commend to the consideration of others, as I may not be always engaged to go back to Bristol.

Horfield.

I HAD not been at Horfield, until my present visit, since old Sayer's time; I am afraid to say how many years ago. The reader is, doubtless, aware I allude to the writer of the History of Bristol. At the period to which I refer, I think he kept a school in the Old Park; at least he did at one time, and he had the perpetual curacy of Horfield, to which he used to go out on Sunday mornings, sometimes on foot, and sometimes in a pony-phæton. For a couple of years, however, before death divorced him from his parochial charge, he had grown too feeble to get through the service without some refreshment; and I recollect full well, just before going up into the pulpit to preach, he used invariably to walk across to the pew in which an elderly lady, his sister-in-law, sat, (I think her name was Turner or Tucker,) and receive from her hands a little lump of sugar, saturated with some drops of brandy. Good old times those were; no one wondered, no one made a remark, and the little congregation (not more than a dozen in number,) looked as regularly for parson Sayer's soaked lump of saccharine as they did for the bidding prayer; though, I confess, to me, for the first time, it had rather a curious effect, to see the old man walk across in his canonicals and hold his hand over the pew for his dole, while the worthy old soul within drew a little phial of Cognac from one pocket, and deliberately, drop by drop, let the due quantity fall on the fragment of white sugar which she took from the other. The Rev. historian having obtained his refresher, proceeded to mount the pulpit stairs, and as he did, "munched, and munched, and munched," like the sailor's wife in Macbeth, his vivifying morsel. Some old clergymen I have seen at times obliged to pause in the middle of the service, for two or three minutes together, to recover strength; and I recollect

being one Sunday at Chew-Magna, when old Doctor A., of Bristol, arrived to do duty; the worthy and learned Doctor was then nearly fourscore years, and he had not proceeded half way through his sermon when he found nature begin to fail; so with the utmost self-possession and complacency he looked towards the singers, who sat in front of the gallery opposite, and thus addressed them: —"My dear children, neither my voice nor myself are as strong as they were, and I feel tired from the long exertion; so be pleased to give us a stave, and by the time you have finished I shall have recovered my breath." The rustic choir immediately arose, and gave him, not a stave, but the whole doxology; which finished, the Doctor said, with emphatic gratitude, "Thank you, children," and proceeded with his discourse. Old Samuel Sayer preached a very sound sermon when you could hear him; he was learned and laborious, and a fair specimen of the old orthodox school, his love of the Church being only equalled by his hatred of heresy and schism.

Horfield in old accounts used to be reckoned two miles from Bristol; but if the building mania continue at its present rate, I suppose the city and the village will some day meet. On the occasion of my last walk, I met a number of untidy girls and unshorn men on the road, returning to Bristol after a morning's cowslipping, and actually "oppressed with perfume," loaded with poles full of that pretty flower, which was being transferred from its sunny home in the pleasant fields to smoky murky shelves and dingy tap rooms in a crowded city. Nothing could be a greater contrast than the difference between these brilliant and perfumed bundles, and the unkempt, unshorn, and unwashed creatures who carried them, and on whose soiled and smoky cheeks the fresh air and exercise of the country could not call up a glow. I can conceive nothing more conducive to health or consistent with innocent recreation than a Sabbath morning's walk in the country to the poorer classes, (who are cribbed and cabined during the week in close and confined rooms in a crowded city,) if they would first wash and clean themselves; but it

seems to be a sort of luxury to the town mechanic to spend the brightest and best part of the day in an uncleanly and untidy condition, a practice which I believe deprives him of half the benefit he might otherwise derive from a morning's walk and the fresh air of the country. The proverb with some force says that "Cleanliness is next to Godliness;" and I never more questioned Dr. Johnson's piety than when he said, speaking of Kit Smart, "another charge against him was he did not love clean linen, and *I have no passion for it;*" a proof that the sage knew nothing of a luxury that surpassed even his leg of pork and plums. For my part I know nothing amongst the minor punishments to which I could be condemned equal to being obliged to go all day unshaved; and when I passed the black muzzled cowslippers on the morning in question, I could not help drawing my fore finger and thumb across my chin with something like the comfortable self-satisfaction of the Pharisee who thanked heaven he was not as other men were. I think myself, when our humbler classes have acquired the habit of rising early on Sunday mornings, cleaning themselves, breakfasting, taking a walk in the country, and then returning to their parish Churches, it may be said that we have got on the sure road to moral and physical improvement.

I don't know any place that, in my recollection, has been so much improved, in fact, so completely metamorphosed as Horfield, or rather that portion of it on which stands what has been happily called "the sacred close," namely, the usual ecclesiastical group, comprising the Church, school house, and parsonage. It forms now as pretty and purely English a bit of landscape as you could see, standing some way in, on an eminence to the left of the main road, from which you get a glimpse of the little tower and parsonage, peeping out from, and bosomed by, beech and chesnut trees. The bells were ringing, and I sat for a while listening on the little wooden stile that led from the road into the fields, and almost loth to lose the influence of scene, and sound, and sunshine, by a nearer approach.

The view from the little churchyard, however, is far more beautiful; and for richness and extent, surpasses, I think, any thing in the neighbourhood, including an almost boundless prospect of wooded hill and dale on one side, and on the other those peopled and picturesque eminences where stands,

> "Piled steep and massy, close and high,
> Mine own romantic town."

The churchyard of Horfield is just what a country churchyard should be; no gloomy-walled *burial-ground*, nor formal, trim, town-garden-like affair; of rustic irregularity, it retains all the character of a resting-place of the dead, where also the living might love to loiter away an hour in quiet and contemplation. A simple hedge, overgrown with tangled woodbine and wild clymatis, incloses it and the little Church, the gothic school-house, and the old trees, which stretch their knotted arms over the green mounds where the "rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep;" while upon all the utmost care is bestowed, but so judiciously as to preserve its simple and country character. A little walk, winding amongst well-grown shrubs, leads from the school to the Church porch, and through this a troop of children in rustic bonnets and grey shawls were passing as I entered the gate. Yet at one time this pretty and picturesque scene must have presented quite a different appearance. I have by me, on a smoky piece of paper, and written in a quaint and antique hand, some verses, the date of which I cannot tell, and the actual circumstances under which they were written I cannot explain; but they would seem to have been composed by some clergyman unattached, who received twelve shillings for a day's duty, and made a most uncomfortable journey from the Hotwells (I should think,) to Horfield to earn the money, under very adverse circumstances, of which he "makes sad moan and most melancholy plaint." As they are veritable verses (I have the original in my possession,) and characteristic of the period, (and the place, at the

time,) the reader will probably be glad to have an opportunity of perusing them :—

A JOURNEY TO HORFIELD.

"The clock struck eight, the morning clear'd,
The chocolate drunk, the coach appeared;
To Horfield bound—a dirty road,
A stomach sick with hippish load;
A rumbling coach, a grumbling wife,
With two friends more, annexed for life.
At length arrived to Horfield Green,
No Church bell heard, no mortal seen;
A puny Church, a surplice damp,
A churchyard soaked in watery swamp;
The reading-desk extremely cold;
A pulpit dusty, weak, and old;
A Prayer Book in dull print letter,
A Bible rather worse than better.
The congregation, great and small,
Made up but few—poor souls and all.
Three ancient dames, with wither'd faces,
Fell fast asleep in lower places;
Two grey-head dons, with gloves on pate,
Sate just above in nodding state;
One maiden fair, in yellow knott,
The only primrose on the spot;
The rest were chiefly farmers' men,
That gaped and listened now and then.
A doleful clerk, that sings or says,
Who's poorly versed in musick's lays;
In broken tunes, now in, now out,
'Twas all confused, like Babel's rout.
Then came the sermon, long and dull,
Adapted right to clodpate skull;
Some gaped, some slept; one sober lad
Beneath his arm a Bible had.
This book-learned youth had witt enough
To search the doctor's scripture proof;
He sat demure, with awkward face,
And doubled down the quoted place.
The sermon done, no dinner near,
A mile, at least, to cup and chear;
Churchwarden hog, not seen at Church,
Left hungry parson in the lurch.
The weather changed to snow and sleet,
Made chattering teeth and chilly feet.

The youth looked blue, the lady pale,
For want of somewhat to regale;
So further drive through mirey ground,
To reach the Ostrich, on the down,
The only place to stop and dine,
And whistles wet with beer and wine.
There, glorious sight! by great good luck,
Before the stomack hour had struck—
A loyne of veal in lordly dish,
And kale and bacon, all I wish,
Allayed the grumbling of the day,
And rous'd our spirits up to play.
We there sat down, content and snug,
With wine and beer and cider mugg;
Yea, cups of tea, the hostess' treat,
Appeared, to make the scene compleat.
Nature refreshed in cheerful way,
We drank and pledged and called to pay;
The coachman wheeled the cliff around,
And brought us home all safe and sound.
Horfield, farewell! thou starving soil,
Not worth the preacher's charge and toil;
Thy gift is shillings twelve—fifteen I spent;
Was ever priest on such an errand sent?
Through dirt and wet, and cold and hunger keen,
To teach sad boor, and ignoramus green?"

The writer certainly does not appear to have had a cheerful day of it—his lines were not cast in pleasant places; but, I think, the fervour with which he complains, that

"Churchwarden hog, not seen at Church,
Left hungry parson in the lurch,"

is quite true to life, for nothing could possibly be more in keeping with the course of nature than that the chance clergyman should find a knife and fork laid for him on the churchwarden's mahogany.

Thinking over these lines, as I sat upon a headstone under the shelter of a fine old tree, and looked across to Stapleton and Stoke, with the rich and beautiful view that lies between, I could hardly believe I was on the scene so deplorably described by the forlorn author of the foregoing verses.

Near the door, and not far from the font, I found a modest seat amongst some quiet rustics, and joined in a simple and solemn service, in keeping with every thing else I had witnessed in and about the place. It is true that a critical ear might have discovered a more perfect choir than the school children, but then they sang decently, with an appearance at least of devotional earnestness, though unaided by organ or instrument, and, what is still more rare than good singing, they conducted themselves properly. The Church is a neat but small structure, being, if I may use the expression, a miniature cruciform building, having nave, cross aisles, and chancel. There is a pretty east window with some painted glass, and the find old trees which surround the edifice, when seen from inside, impart to the worshipper in that little temple a feeling of sylvan and solemn seclusion, enhanced by the reverential and subdued tone in which the services are read. Indeed, there was altogether about that little Church, and its simple congregation, an air of tranquillity and retirement, which awakened in the heart, if no higher feelings, at least a sense of solemn repose.

In the cross aisles are small galleries, and the Church in other respects has rather a crowded appearance, the pulpit and reading desk interrupting the view of the altar. In connection with the latter I have a word or two to say. From my boyhood upwards, and long before there was a word about the matter, I had been in the habit of following my excellent mother's example, and turning to the east on the Creed being read, and I still continue to do so, though I attach no particular moment to the observance or the omission of it; I, therefore, am far from objecting to a practice which I have always followed myself; still, were I the clergyman of Horfield, I should discontinue it, until such time as from the re-arrangement of the interior I could more naturally and obviously comply with the custom, for at present the clergyman, in turning to the east, from the situation of the reading desk, turns his face not to the altar, but close to and almost against the front panel of the pulpit, which to the congregation

has an odd and almost absurd appearance. Of this, perhaps, the clergyman himself is not aware; but to my mind it certainly had a strange effect.

The sermon was from the 17th and 18th verses of that "beautiful, sublime, and comprehensive but very difficult psalm," as Bishop Horne calls it, the 68th—"The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is amongst them as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive; Thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." I suppose no one, not even the most cold and apathetic nature, has ever read this Psalm, which was composed on that festive and joyful occasion the removal of the ark to Mount Zion,* without being struck with the grandeur and glory of its language, and the gorgeous sublimity of its figures; but in the latter of the two verses taken for the text, and which was sung when the ark had ascended Mount Zion, the devotional enthusiasm of the royal minstrel seems to have burst forth in its fullest grandeur and exultation. I am not very fond of moulding into set phrase my opinion of a sermon. I prefer saying off at once what strikes me at once, and the present discourse was full of richness and eloquence of thought and language.

* Bishop Horne, in his argument, gives the following epitome of this Psalm:—"It seems evidently to have been composed on that festive and joyful occasion, the removal of the ark to Mount Sion. See 2 Sam. vi., 1 Chron. xv. Under this figure, David, foreseeing the exaltation of Messiah, speaks of him, whom he describes, 1, 2, as arising and vanquishing his enemies; 3—6, as causing the faithful to rejoice, and showing mercy to the afflicted; 7—15, as bringing his Church out of bondage, supporting her in the world by the Word and the Spirit, purging away her corruptions, and subduing her adversaries; the groundwork being laid in the history of the Egyptian deliverance, the Manna and the Law given in the wilderness, and the overthrow of the Canaanitish nations; 16—20, David returns to the scene beforehim, celebrates the ascension of Christ with power, great glory, to the heavenly Sion, and the gifts he should from thence pour down upon men; 21—23, foretels the vengeance he would take on his opposers; 24—28, sets forth the order of the Church in her services; 29—31, predicts the conversion of the nations; all of whom, 32—35, he exhorts to unite in chanting forth the praises of their God and Saviour."

It is true that one would fancy it were not easy to preach a tame or spiritless sermon from such a text; but this was not the wordy tinsel which some call eloquence, but the effusion of a mind which deeply, and I think devoutly, entered into and appeared embued with that oriental glow and warmth, which makes this Psalm "glitter like the Temple itself, when tower and dome were gilded with the setting glory of an Eastern sun." I am quite well aware that I praise one who, (as two excellent and amiable lady friends, co-lodgers of mine, declared) has a tendency towards Oxford; but if such a man preaches a good sermon, I cannot help it. I found the Church neatly kept, the services decently and devoutly performed, the school children taught and clothed, and all through the exertions and liberality of a permanent Curate of some £80 a year; and I do, as I should do, and have done, whenever I have found disinterestedness and zeal united, commend both, without regard to party distinctions, which I have no desire to recognise.

The sermon over, I confess I was not a little alarmed, and thought of my lady friends, when I saw the preacher descend from the pulpit, and immediately proceed with the offertory sentences, while the churchwardens moved out of their pews with two mysterious little wooden boxes. As the late agitation throughout the country has made me quite nervous on this point, I took up my hat and umbrella, and was preparing to escape, half in fear and half in displeasure, when shame caught hold of the skirts of my brown coat, and said, "remain where you are," and I did remain, glancing, however, furtively and timidly around to see if Pope Gregory was any where in the Church; in the mean time the collection quietly proceeded, the churchwardens moving modestly from pew to pew, the clink of the poor man's penny and the farmer's sixpence, as they fell into the little wooden boxes, being the only sound that mingled with the solemn reading of the offertory sentences. I looked to see the people rise up and leave *en masse;* but nobody stirred, and I concluded that the "special reporter" of the London *Times*, who

might well say with the man in the play, "poor people, they would never know half their misfortunes if it were not for me," had, as he passed by on the high road, in his clemency, or ignorance, or contempt, abstained from blowing his horn against the little Church amongst the chesnut and beech trees. By this time the box had reached me; I instinctively put my fore finger and thumb in my waistcoat pocket, and before I could recover my presence of mind I had committed the sin of dropping a small coin amongst the pence and half-pence of the rustics. "Well," thought I, as my alms fell from between my fingers, "if I have done wrong, I can't help it now; but can this be, after all, what they have been turning the world upside down about, what the city of Exeter has been all but burned for, and Henry of that ilk has had his mitre nearly knocked from his head, (or his head from under his mitre,) and angry editors have written and mobs raved about?" "Behold how great a fire so small a spark kindleth." These simple people do not, thought I, seem to be aware of the precipice on which they stand; and the little girl by my side, who has just dropt her alms of one halfpenny so artlessly and so innocently into the box, is not, I'll be bound, conscious that she has just been doing that which has convulsed the Church to its centre, and rocked the thrones of bishops beneath them. Nobody appeared to be aware that they were doing harm in giving their pence and sixpences for the services of religion and the poor; and as ignorance was bliss in their case, I thought I'd restrain my ambition to turn agitator, and withhold from instigating the congregation to burn the parsonage. I was afterwards told that there is nearly £60 a year collected in this manner in this little Church, but then there are some mysterious old ladies who occasionally contribute through the parson.*

* Of the donations thus transmitted through the clergyman, are some for special purposes "stated by the donors." Amongst the latter I saw in the published accounts of one year, "Towards a stone altar, £5;" the prudence or profitableness of which I am at a loss to discover, while there are so many other modes, temporal and religious, more solid and useful of employing £5. While even bread is wanted I would not think of offering stone.

The churchwardens having deposited the offerings in the alms dish, we were dismissed with the blessing.

I had passed through the little churchyard gate, and nearly reached the fields, when I heard some one running after me, and turning round saw a gentleman in black, whom I recognized as the churchwarden who had received my alms, panting and puffing, and trying to muster breath enough to hail me. It at once struck me that I had given him a sovereign by mistake, and that he had come or been sent to make restitution; but no such thing, he was the bearer of a double invitation, one from the parson to dine, and another from himself to lunch.

"Venerable Sir," said he, as soon as he could recover his breath, and lifting his hat with much politeness, "surely you will not pass the churchwarden's door without turning in to lunch. You must require some refreshment, as I perceive you do not employ John Bunyan this morning. Mr. Richards also requests me to say that there will be boiled beef and plum-pudding at the parsonage at five, if you will do him the favour to remain until after second service, for dinner."

"Spirit of Fabricius and Aristides the Just," said I, indignantly, "here is a palpable attempt to corrupt the pure source of impartiality and justice. What, Sir! don't you think I have a soul above boiled beef, even with the accompanying allurement of plum-pudding? No, Sir, I'll even outrage my better judgment, and abuse your clergyman, to show my stern disinterestedness!" and I struck my walking-cane with indignation full two inches into the greensward.

The churchwarden of Horfield grew pale, nay, I believe he trembled at an old man's warmth, as he observed deprecatingly, that they had no wish to bias my mind, but merely to refresh my body; I had doubtless by this formed my opinion of the parson and the parish?

"I have, Sir," said I, "and it was a good one, but the invitation has spoiled it."

"Well," said he, smiling, "I thought the hospitality of a parish would never be a crime in the eyes of the Church-Goer."

I smiled too, and with that smile I lost my resolution, reader; for I consented to return and lunch with the churchwarden; "but I repudiate the boiled beef," said I, "I renounce the plum-pudding, besides I could not think of preying on a perpetual Curate, who gives more than he gets from the Church."

In a few minutes more I had tasted the churchwarden's "home brewed and double Glo'ster," and at three o'clock I found myself again in the little Church of Horfield; no longer, however, near the door, but seated in great dignity and state in the churchwarden's pew.

I was glad, independent of the churchwarden's home-brew and double Glo'ster, that I remained for afternoon prayers, as I had an opportunity of witnessing that most interesting service the public baptism of an infant. In a pew immediately below me, (for I sat in the gallery,) and rocked on its intended godmother's knee, was the little innocent, clad in a pretty blue pelisse trimed with swans-down, and such a ribboned cap and tasty head dress. It was lying on its back, and its small blue eyes occasionally winked up at me or a plaster cherub close by, with such a seeming intelligence, that, were I a believer in the *metempsycosis*, I should have fancied we had been acquaintances before, under different forms. I could not help thinking too, (it was a queer thought, you'll say, to enter my head,) how Napoleon, if the prodigy was ever baptized, looked at the font; and what the "Iron Duke" was like in his swaddling clothes; how little their godfathers and godmothers knew of the future destinies of the pretty creatures for whom they so readily answered. This public baptism, before the face of the congregation, has a most peculiar and interesting effect; the pause in the service, the slight stir of curiosity amongst the congregation, the surpliced clergyman descending from the reading desk, the infants being taken to the font, and the sponsors leaving their pews, are circumstances familiar to every one, and yet from their familiarity do not lose their effect; and then the clear tone of the minister as he questions the sponsors, and their subdued answers, and the truly beau-

tiful prayers with which it is interspersed, render the order of baptism one of the most pleasing, and to those who witness it, I hope not one of the least profitable of the services of our Church; for if the obligations and the duties therein imposed be disregarded or neglected, it is not for want of being urged with deep and impressive solemnity. When I find a description ready to my hand, and so much better than anything of my own, I am not the person to take the trouble of writing one; and I now bethink me of a beautiful sketch by Professor Wilson, with which I will conclude, and which, making allowances for the difference between the Kirk of Scotland and the Church of England, will be found most touchingly apposite and true:—

"It is a pleasant and impressive time, when at the close of divine service, in some small country Church, there takes place the gentle stir and preparation for a Baptism. A sudden air of cheerfulness spreads over the whole congregation; the more solemn expression of all countenances fades away, and it is at once felt that a rite is about to be performed, which, although of a sacred and awful kind, is yet connected with a thousand delightful associations of purity, beauty, and innocence. Then there is an eager bending of smiling faces over the humble galleries, an unconscious rising up in affectionate curiosity, and a slight murmuring sound, in which is no violation of the Sabbath sanctity of God's house, when in the middle passage of the Church the party of women is seen, matrons and maids, who bear in their bosoms, or in their arms, the helpless beings about to be made members of the Christian communion. There sit, all dressed becomingly in white, the fond and happy baptismal group. The babies have been entrusted, for a precious hour, to the bosoms of young maidens, who tenderly fold them to their yearning hearts, and with endearments taught by nature, are stilling, not always successfully, their plaintive cries. Then the proud and delighted girls rise up, one after the other, in the sight of the whole congregation, and hold up the infants, arrayed in neat caps and long-flowing linen, into their fathers'

hands. For the poorest of the poor, if he has a heart at all, will have his infant well dressed on such a day, even although it should scant his meal for weeks to come, and force him to spare fuel to his winter fire."

Weston-super-Mare.

Weston! Who's for Weston?" said, or rather shouted, the man in green, throwing open the door of a second-class carriage at the same time.

"I, for one, am," I replied, about to step in.

"Please, first show your ticket, Sir," said he, interposing his great arm between my body and the carriage, and compelling me to unbutton my surtout, and undo all my comfortable preparations for the journey, in order to hunt in my waistcoat pocket for a slip of printed blue paper.

"That'll do," said he, as soon as he saw the corner of it peeping out, and I took my seat.

"Weston! Weston, who's for Weston?" still shouted the conductor, continuing to hold the door in his hand.

"Here," said a decently dressed young mother, hurrying up with an infant in her arms, and followed by her husband, a respectable, manly-looking mechanic, with a fine little boy about three years old in his hand. Two young shopmen, as many young girls, an elderly man, and lady of mature age followed, and the conductor, with a bang of the door, left us, and proceeded to fill another carriage.

It is strange what a *microcosmical* tendency (if I may use the expression, and it has rather puzzled my fingers to write it) a man's mind naturally has. There is no one that reads this that has not experienced what I mean, that has not, when he has gone on board a steam-vessel, or entered a stage-coach or a railway-carriage, made for himself, for the time being, a little world out of the small circle into which he is by accident cast—that has not withdrawn himself from the multitude outside, to contemplate the little coterie which with himself are enclosed within the four partitions at that moment; it is, in fact,

his microcosm, his little world: for however brief a space, he limits his speculations and conjectures to the business, the destinations, or the quality of his co-travellers and co-voyagers, and temporarily interests himself, or perhaps tries to make an impression, in and on each individual, as he never would have done but for this casual contiguity. He knows he, perhaps, may never see them again, that at most their lot is cast together only for an hour or two, still he will not permit even this time to be a blank, the activity or egotism of the mind will not be idle for a moment. And it is all for the best, this instinct is a main ingredient of sociability; man's wish to please might by some casuists be explained as an effort at effect; and after all, no company is too small, or no time too brief, for display. Some naturalists have said that every leaf is a miniature of its parent tree: so every little social knot may be deemed an epitome of society at large; it is but the little wheel within the great wheel, and it is a small circle, indeed, that will not, even in a railroad-carriage, give something like a synopsis of the main motives and dispositions that actuate society, and in the usual complement of six on either side you may see selfishness and sociability, ostentation and vanity, sense and nonsense: for instance, why did one of the shopmen pull off his glove, and use so many ingenious devices to show a bulky ring, if not to make an impression on the company, who in twenty minutes more would have forgotten both himself and his ring? What was he or his lump of jewellery to me? yet could I have placed my hand on my heart and honestly said, that in pulling out the massive, old-fashioned gold watch which my father left me, I had not something like a secret pride or satisfaction in overpowering him with the superior weight of metal? Then, the young girl who sat nearly opposite me, was she insensible to even the momentary admiration of her chance companions, as she now and again smoothed her bonnet ribbon, or repaired the ravages of the breeze amongst "the convolutions of her ringlets?" Then, there was the old hard visaged fellow, who crushed himself into, and the young mother out of, a seat, that he might have

his back to the engine, was he no type of the selfishness of the world, which cares not who is exposed to the wind so that itself is not?

Now I don't mean this for philosophy; for I don't wish, or don't want, or don't mean to be philosophical: I intend it for common sense, whether the reader will or not recognise it for such is another question. I am not one of those who affect to be reading or able to read profound moral lessons from Dan to Beersheba; but I think a man may always find occupation, and perhaps innocent amusement for himself, if he only has the faculty (to use a common but comprehensive phrase) of "making himself agreeable and at home" wherever he is. A wiser man than myself has observed that "there is nothing too little for so little a creature as man; it is by studying little things that we attain the great art of having as little misery and as much happiness as possible." There are some people have this talent to a marvellous degree, who are born with a pleasant and easy flexibility and freedom of manner which places them at once on a friendly footing with whatever company they may be thrown into for the moment; and the company themselves instinctively find it out; for poor human nature, notwithstanding all the hard things we say of it, is never slow to make the discovery, or to appreciate what is amiable or agreeable. I suppose people have found out by this time that I am given to talk occasionally of myself; perhaps they will still further bear with me when I say that my excellent father was in the habit of impressing it on my mind, that by doing or saying a civil thing I never could do wrong. I have tried to follow his advice, always endeavouring to temper each little sociable advance with suitable respect, so as not to offend any; and I find, looking at the matter even in an interested light, that I lose nothing by it, for my civilities are mostly returned fourfold. For instance, when my friend, the honest mechanic, came up to the carriage on Sunday morning, I tendered my services to assist his wife in with the band box and the baby, not, perhaps, that my assistance was any great advantage after all; for con-

sidering what little experience I have in babies, I cannot be expected to be very useful in that department at least, but they took the will for the deed—they saw I meant to be civil if I could; they were, therefore, obliged to me, and we were on the most friendly terms all the way, even to the eldest boy, who was a fine fellow, and took a most lively interest in the interior of my watch.

Seriously, however, there is no class amongst the multitudinous ones of which the mass of this great country is composed, the contemplation of which awakens so much interest, and creates so much pleasure, as the respectable, decent, and decently-dressed mechanic, who adorns the state of life to which it has pleased God to call him, and seeks, with a laudable pride, to make his own appearance and that of his family, as creditable as his little competence will permit: this man was well habited, and so was his wife, and even still more care and attention were bestowed to render the boy and the baby neat and becoming. And I have no doubt that their home was in keeping with their personal appearance, clean and comfortable; and, arguing from what I saw, I could mentally picture to myself the sanded floor and the bright fire irons, and the furnished dresser, and the clock, and the bird cage, and perhaps the little shelf of books, for I am confident that there are few, however humble their means, who, if they have conduct and the disposition, I'll say the ambition, to be so, may not secure domestic comfort, and even some few domestic luxuries for themselves. Only inspire a decent pride in their minds, and do what you can to aid and encourage it, and you do more, by raising the mechanical and labouring classes, to improve the nation, through meritorious and contented citizens and subjects, than if you were making long speeches through a long life; for if each were content to do a little instead of talking a great deal, it is marvellous how rapidly the sum of human happiness would accumulate.

I lost my friends at Clevedon-road station, having by that time established something like an acquaintance with all the family, especially the eldest boy, who was so fine

a little fellow that, were I now to make my will, I should be almost disposed to remember him in my codicil For want of better company, I read Izaak Walton until we reached Weston.

On entering my young friend Rogers', the successor of old friend Reeves, I found four single gentlemen engaged on double that number of mutton chops; and as I started without breakfast, I resolved so far to follow their example, as to substitute fresh eggs for fresh meat. One of them asked me if I came up by the train; and another, what I thought of Maynooth. I said, I came up by the train, and I never thought of Maynooth. The politician said the grant was a dreadful thing; and I answered, that every one who spoke to me (for I spoke to no one on the subject,) said so; and as every body knew more about it, I took their word for the matter; but to tell him the truth, it did not very seriously affect my appetite. Every body scolded Sir Robert Peel, and perhaps he deserved it; but as I made it a point always to say to a man's face what I thought of him, I reserved my censures until such time as I should have the pleasure of dining with him. My neighbour stared at me for a few seconds; and I should not be surprised if he were at this moment labouring under the delusion that he had the honour of breakfasting with the sub-secretary of state—a circumstance not so very unlikely, considering the fascinations of Weston and the speed of express trains.

I had time to take a few turns on the esplanade before service, and to recognise Bristol features in every second countenance I saw. I am not a guide-book, and therefore have nothing to say on scenery and all that; and even if I were, I could not give half as good a description as a second-class return ticket. Mrs. Piozzi tells us that her Great Sage was wont to observe, in his own way, that "the finest waters were those that afforded the most fish;" and, perhaps, upon this principle the sea which is within an easy distance of Weston, and which is said to abound in sole, though not the most picturesque, may still be admired. Some people abuse the mud, and some doctors

praise it—the latter maintain it to be wholesome, &c.; and considering that I only meant to stay a few hours there, it was not worth my while entering into a critical examination of the arguments on either side.

After a brief promenade I sat down on one of the seats; and, whether it was the influence of animal magnetism or not, an elderly lady soon took up her position on the same bench. This seemed a move towards sociability: 'twas an opportunity, too, to know something about the Church, the parson, and the parish; and as I never let such an one slip, I inquired, after some observations on the weather, how she liked the clergymen; for this is the only mode by which I can obtain the little information I occasionally impart to the reader. The old lady was in raptures with them all—she loved the Archdeacon, she liked Mr. Forsyth, and she admired Mr. Rowley, who was gone to get married—a very sufficient excuse, you'll say, for a temporary absence. "We have no Puseyism here, sir," she continued, with animation.

"Indeed! ma'am," said I, "and the lodges all let: you really are very fortunate."

"Indeed, sir, we are; and in these days when Tractarianism is so rife elsewhere. Do you know what, sir?"

"What, ma'am?"

"A friend, on whose word I can rely, told me yesterday, such is the sad lengths to which those people go, that Pusey is in the habit of waking his children at night and dropping hot sealing-wax on their little noses, to teach them endurance, sufferance, and all that!"

I could only groan forth my horror.

"And you have, doubtless, heard, sir," she continued, "he is in the practice of sacrificing a lamb weekly."

"I have, ma'am, and observed, at the same time, that his butcher's bill must be enormous."

I was afraid some one had been imposing on my respectable neighbour, if, indeed, she was not one of Dr. Fox's friends at Knightstone, come for the benefit of her health; so I changed the subject, least possibly, it might

be monomaniacal, and found she knew a good deal about the parish, and when not on the besetting topic was an agreeable gossip enough.

Wondering how one could get nobody to talk about *the* Church, though each had something to say about high Church or low Church, I followed in the wake of several Bath-chairs and many people to the sole place of Established Worship which the Westonians possess. Johnson, speaking one day of Dr. John Campbell, the author of "Hermippus Redivivus," said, "I am afraid he has not been in the inside of a Church for many years, but he never passes one without pulling off his hat. This shows that he has good principles!" I question if even Campbell, with all his reverential feelings could be induced to make his obedience in passing Weston Church, for it is one of the most raw, wretched, discreditable specimens of Christian architecture I ever beheld; a common hodman would have planned a better one. I have now before me a pretty little drawing, by a very clever person, of the old Church; which, judging from "its counterfeit presentment," was a pleasing and venerable structure. When people, however, began to fancy the place, the Church was found to be too small, so instead of erecting a second they pulled down the old one, and raised the present one on its site, a farmer having heroically undertaken the construction of the new. Shade of Sir Christopher Wren and body of Pugin! just fancy a producer of swedes and a cultivator of potatoes building a Gothic Church; but above all, fancy the kind of people that permitted him to do it. Were there no architects in the world, or was Weston out of it at the time? Alexander would have rebuilt the Ephesian Diana's Temple if they allowed him to place his name over the porch; the architectural farmer, the bucolical builder, ought to have inscribed his over the belfry-door, which is the only one he made for the admission of the congregation—he ought to have carved "PARSLEY" in deep indented letters on a dashing scroll, and posterity in gratitude would doubtless have added *butter* in abundance.

The Archdeacon has built a tolerably decent new north aisle, but I cannot applaud the judgment that tacks a new patch to such an execrable old garment; nothing but pulling down Mr. Parsley's work will ever make it better than a great, ungainly, awkward, preaching house. There was lead, too, on the old Church, and there are slates on the present. Another thing, by the 82nd of Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiastical, the Commandments are required to be set up on the east end of every Church and Chapel, at the charge of the parish, and yet there was not a single letter of the Decalogue against the wall or elsewhere of Weston Church. There is, of course, a penalty for non-compliance, and if nobody else will I think I shall some day or other make them feel my virtuous indignation. I'll have a Proctor—I'll retain young Burges, or somebody else, and proceed against them to the uttermost extent of the law, until I make them feel that Canons and Constitutions are not cobwebs or soap bubbles. I see that my zealous and over-powering friend, Edw. Parker, writing a letter last week to the papers, reminds somebody that the Ninth Commandment is not repealed; one would fancy that the parishioners of Weston were of opinion that the whole ten were abrogated, or at least a dead letter, for they find no place for them.

Tremble then, churchwardens, for I suppose there are churchwardens, though I did not see any rods, lictors without fasces; there was, however, a large pew which savoured somewhat of the official, and which had been fitted up for them by the Rector, the two small pincushions placed on the desk being of their own providing. The font is in keeping with every thing else; instead of being placed, as the proper notions of ritualism require it, at the entrance of the Church, it stands, no very slightly object, nearly at the chancel.

There is a large pew in the north aisle, some one called a drawing room pew, which belongs to the Pigotts, and which is entered by a private door outside; it is quite an independent apartment, being protected from vulgar gaze by a world of wood work, brass rails, and red curtains.

I notice that for years people have been firing a great many letters at this freak, but seemingly all to no purpose; for though bombarded so long by paper pellets, the merino and the high panelling still stand, and Mr. Pigott (*vir propositi tenax*) still prays or sleeps on in his family pew unmoved, amidst soft cushions and Turkey carpets, which, however, are not (nor indeed, is any portion of the Church) in a particularly cleanly condition; though the sexton, who is fond of a good seat, and, like a sensible man, takes care of himself in this respect with as much solicitude as he does any one else, ought to have a sufficient interest in the accommodation to look to it. As I have a regard for the personal comfort of this functionary, and it may not be always convenient for the occupiers to accommodate him, I would suggest that the churchwardens should build a pew for his private use, and in the best part of the Church, so that he might be always at hand when wanted. To intercept the breeze, there is a curtain placed over the west door of the new north aisle, which was hung there through the delicate attention of the Archdeacon; for which the ladies, however, are so ungrateful as to declare, whatever it was meant for, the only purpose it serves is to spoil their bonnets. The greater part of the chancel is, I believe, old; in it there are two mural monuments of ladies of the Pigott or Smith families — one a medallion, (I believe) by Chantry; and the other a full length figure, I was told, by a pupil of his.

One Church is not sufficient, nor anything like it, for Weston, a place where a new population makes its appearance, like a flight of swallows, every summer. The usual consequences are in such cases that the poor natives, like the aborigines of the back woods, are crowded out by civilization and the immigrants. The Church is always in the season densely filled, and in June or July you may think yourself particularly fortunate if you can obtain six square inches of deal board any where within the building, whether it be amongst high or low, rich or poor. The congregation upon most occasions is of a very composite character. For the sake of keeping up that fond feeling

which temporary absence is said to freshen and improve, the citizens of Bristol are in the habit of separating themselves from their wives and families, or rather separating their families and wives from them, for a few months every summer, merely running down with a hamper of vivers every Saturday night and spending over Sunday. Weston has been fortunate enough to become (as a friend of mine called them) one of the most fortunate of those "places of hebdomadal exile;" and you would sometimes have fancied that "Birnam Wood had come to Dunsinane" or rather that half Bristol had debouched upon Weston during the Summer Sundays. This is one cause of the crowded state of Weston. It has also begun to be the residence of retired *militaires*—some of those heroes, who after serving their country by consuming currie and East India Madeira under the tropics, retire with bloodless pensions to keep themselves cool in a marine residence for the rest of their lives. These are invariably the best attendants at Church, to which they impart rather a foreign air; so that if it were not for Mr. Parsley you might almost fancy yourself at times in Calcutta Cathedral.

The services were most decorously gone through, and the singing, which was done from books containing, I think, eight hundred hymns, (what they want of half the number I cannot conceive,) heartily joined in. The Archdeacon, owing to ill health has not, I believe, officiated for three years; he is much liked, though indifferently aided by the parishioners in his attempts to improve the Church. They look sharp after No. 1, do these said parishioners; and, professing a great reverence for religion, they still think, with Cowper's tithe-payers, their pastor

"Sells it plaguey dear."

if he expects them to put their hands in their pockets for any thing more than they imagine they barely want.

The prayers were read and the sermon preached by the Rev.—Forsyth, in the absence of his brother curate, who, as my fair friend on the esplanade informed me, had gone

to be married. The text was from Ephesians, chap. ii. v. 18; it was a capital sermon—earnest and persuasive, though moderate and modest. He touched upon forms and ceremonies, not factiously or fashionably, but with judgment, good sense, and temperance; which was most gratifying in these times of extreme notions on all sides. I have a dread of watering-place curates for the most part, as the idle population of old and young ladies generally do all they can to spoil them with praise and presents, and they get, as it were, unmanned; they contract a kind of fashionable religious effeminacy, which fritters itself away in classes, morning calls, and coteries of lady theologians. But there was none of this about the preacher on the present occasion; though young, he was no pulpit *enfant gâté*; he was a common sense, earnest, pains-taking man; and I sincerely hope he buys all his slippers, for gratuitous slippers do more than weightier articles to weaken a man's understanding.

Frenchay.

In this age, when we hear, and have such cause for complaint against the parsimony of the rich, who many of them possessing the property of the Church, yet give with a narrow hand and niggard soul towards it, how pleasant and refreshing to see, as we do at times, a suitable and solemn structure, such as Frenchay, rise to renown the liberality of a few, and reproach the indifference of thousands.

If there is one thing in which I more heartily sympathize than another, it is in the quaint but cutting invectives of old Burton against "our Simoniacal *Church-chopping* patrons, and sacreligious harpies," as he calls them, "who detain tithes," and instead of giving from their abundance to the cause of religion, add to their own from its inheritance. "For my part," exclaims the hearty *old* Democritus *junior*, in an honest passion, "let them pretend what zeal they will, counterfeit religion, blear the world's eyes, bombast themselves, and stuff out their greatness with Church spoil, shine like so many peacocks—so cold is my charity, so defective in this behalf, that I shall never think better of them, than that they are rotten at core, their bones are full of Epicurean hypocrisil and atheistical marrow; they are worse than heathens," Circumstances enjoin secrecy, and we do not hear so much of those underhand frauds against the Establishment, and impositions upon the poor clergy, as we might otherwise do; but we *see* in the griping way in which some people who, to use a popular hyperbole, are "wallowing in wealth," hold, or rather withhold, their hand from helping the cause of charity and religion, the empire which Mammon asserts over their hearts.

I am often ashamed of myself, feeling as if I participated in the degradation of my species, when I see the

tenacious gripe which some people retain of their riches —the mean and miserable but most impregnable obstinacy with which they fortify themselves against every application for the relief of ignorance and want. I was some months ago walking through the streets of Bristol, when I fell into company with two clergymen, who were soliciting subscriptions to provide a poor and dense population with a place and means of worship: at that moment a man, full of years and wealth, and who had only a short time before risen from a bed of sickness, to be, as it were, a monument of the extreme mercy of heaven, made his appearance on the opposite side: the clergymen, looking upon this as a providential opportunity, crossed over, and what they said to him I could not *hear*, but I could *see* he raised his hands peevishly, as if deprecating their importunity, and tottered on muttering his plump denial, or still more pitiful excuse. This was an illustration of his duty towards God and his neighbour—his duty towards God, who spared him a little longer to live amongst and love his gains, and to his neighbour who had a *right* to look to him for relief. Some of the early Saracens advanced to the charge with a leaf of the Koran on each foremost spear, and I think those who solicit the niggard and reluctant rich should take a hint from the Pagan practice, and have the parable of Dives and Lazarus on all such occasions carried before them. Placid argument will not do with such people: you must *terrify* them into good acts and alms; and even then, according to my old friend and favourite already quoted, you are not sure of success: "thunder, lighten, preach hell and damnation, tell them 'tis a sin—they will not believe it: denounce and terrifie: they have cauterized consciences—they do not attend: as the inchanted adder they stop their ears." (Part 1, sec. 2.) Yet they are well aware of the danger of over taxing the ignorance and want of the world, but comfort and content themselves with the knowledge that others of far less means, but far more liberality, will prevent the mischief by doing what they themselves ought to do—they don't want for shrewdness, but they deplorably do for generosity.

I dare say I am all this time standing on the corns of several, perhaps, of my readers, but I cannot help it; nay, I am almost malicious enough to wish I was *rough-shod* for their sakes.

This is in plain words the spirit and substance of a train of thought suggested by the first sight of Frenchay Church; and the last and latest footman had disappeared with his red plush breeches through the porch before my ruminations had come to an end. I like Frenchay—I like its appearance from a distance, and I like it still more when you approach it. Thatched cottages and rustic contentment are very well in their way, and no one has a greater respect for the "picturesque moral" and "bold peasantry, their country's pride," than the humble individual who has now his pen in his hand: but I am not displeased at times to find myself remote from even the associations of indigence, amongst fine houses with old trees, which *impute* at least a thousand a year to those who possess them; and such is the appearance of the residences that skirt the common and flank the Church of Frenchay; for when this district was divided from Winterbourne (of which parish it once formed part), the rich people fell to the lot of the new Incumbent, and the greater portion of the tithes, with all the hatters, remained to the share of the Rev. Dr. Allen.

The situation of the Church at the east end of a spacious and well kept common, bounded on all sides by elegant and well wooded residences, is such as cannot fail to attract the notice and claim the admiration of the visitor; and though the hands of the clock in front of the tower pointed to five minutes past eleven, I was disposed to pause for an additional moment outside to contemplate the scene, and abide the gaze of the sexton and sextoness, who looked towards me as if they thought it was quite time I entered. Being a recent structure, Frenchay of course wants the *prestige* of an old parish Church: there is no ancient cross that witnessed the reverential feelings of rude and remote ages; you miss outside the grey and scarcely legible headstones, that

indicate the sleeping place of bygone generations; and within, you look in vain for the monumental tombs of mailed squires, who got measured by the village blacksmith, instead of the London fashioner, for their suits. Still it has by no means a new or naked appearance: on the contrary, the utmost good taste and feeling has been shown in its construction, and a due and judicious use has been made of all those architectural aids and accessories which give solemnity of effect to a sacred building.

The Church, which is of the Decorated Gothic, consists of a centre and north and south aisles, and small or budding chancel: there is a fine painted east window, and one or two others of stained glass: the ceiling is formed of intersecting arches, which spring from two rows of columns that support it, and a gallery traverses the building on three sides. This gallery seems to be appropriated to the *upper* classes, who in situation at least sustain their title: the body of the Church was abandoned to their humbler fellow parishioners, their footmen, and myself. This discovery, however, I think it only fair to say, I owe more to my own local knowledge of the inhabitants, than to any overt or ostentatious evidence of the fact; for nothing could be more unobtrusive, or more decorous, than the conduct of the whole congregation, and especially that portion of them who occupied the gallery, and who neither in dress nor demeanour seemed to assert a superiority over the simpler worshippers; not that I am amongst those who would interdict figured brocades from the boundaries of the Church, or forbid satins from rustling within its sacred precincts. I have no sympathy with those persons who preach against bow-knots, and with tasty foretops of their own, point cutting invectives against innocent curls, for some evenings since I walked into a certain Church in Bristol, and heard a curate, with a gold ring on his finger, delivering a discourse against flounces and artificial flowers. But though I look with charity on an unoffending ringlet, and have plenary indulgence for the sin of a pretty dress or a pink ribbon, I nevertheless cannot bear to see, as I have seen,

some ladies enter the solemn temple professedly with lowly, penitent, and obedient hearts, yet in a garb and gait that plainly show a premeditation to display, for as an old and unsparing Satirist observes—

> "When such a she-priest comes her mass to say,
> Twenty to one they all forget to pray."

This irreverent practice proved too much for the patience of Basil in his day, and he complains of their "coming provided to that place with such curious compliments, with such gestures and tires, as if they should go to a dancing school or a stage play fitter than a Church."

Frenchay is one of the few places I have seen where the congregation have sufficient strength of decorum to resist turning their eyes towards the door when a stranger enters; I wish they had also sufficient fortitude to abstain from lolling and looking up at the organ loft during the singing.

The attendance, though not small, does not seem to be sufficiently large to fill the edifice; there are still great grounds for comfort and encouragement, considering the district is not very populous, and the Church is of comparatively recent foundation. Of this foundation a simple and unforced statement will be sufficient to redound to the credit of those concerned, and I can only hope may be effectual to make others follow their example.

The extent of the parish of Winterbourne, and the inconvenient distance of many of its inhabitants from the Mother Church, induced some of the opulent residents in Frenchay to raise a subscription in the year 1833, for the purpose of erecting a new Church there. Amongst the most liberal of the contributors was the late George Worrall, Esq., who not only expended a large sum upon the building, but devoted the greater part of his time for two years in the superintendence of the present handsome structure. The Church was consecrated in the summer of 1834; it contains sittings for 800 persons, of which (in accordance with the stipulations of the Incorporated Church Building Society, who made a grant of £500

from its funds in aid of the Church,) nearly three-fourths are declared free and unappropriated for ever. The Fellows of St. John's College, Oxford, are the patrons of this incumbency; which, after having been endowed by them with a certain portion of the tithes payable to the Mother Church, was, in the year 1840, at the death of Mr. Worrall, considerably augmented and constituted a distinct Rectory, he having left by will for that purpose two freehold estates, one at Keynsham and the other at Westerleigh, yielding together a considerable annual rental.

After Mr. Worrall's decease, his lady purchased and presented to the living a handsome and commodious parsonage house, near the Church, in which the Rector now resides; and to her munificence also may be attributed the present neat building on the Common, used as a National School, and as a residence for the master and mistress. Considerable opposition has been manifested by the Dissenters in Frenchay to the laying of a rate for the repair of the fabric, and of the provision of things decent for the celebration of Divine worship; but this deficiency has hitherto been, and is now, supplied by a lady whose good and charitable deeds will be remembered in the parish, long after she has ceased to yield living proofs of her extensive and judicious alms-giving.

Such is the substance of some particulars which I received from a friend, to whom I applied for a little information as to dates, &c. At the bottom of the memoranda forwarded to me, he had playfully added—

"God save the Queen, *and Mrs. Rooke;*"

and I sincerely and seriously join in the prayer or proclamation. I would not seem to mention even such liberality with excessive praise. The late Mr. Worrall and his lady, notwithstanding all they did, did no more than their duty; but, considering how few now-a-days do their duty, I will say, these rare and unfrequent instances refreshingly recall to mind the pious generosity of ancient times.

I recollect very well when Mr. Worrall was in progress with this Church; and never did any one appear more heartily or happily engaged in a good work. I particularly remember being in the Chamberlain's office paying some little head-rent to the Corporation, when Mr. W. entered for the purpose of consulting my old schoolfellow about the east window, and the painting which now ornaments the altar; and I remarked when he went out, that he seemed keener in the service of the Church than in the sports of the field, of which he was so fond. You may depend upon it, it offers no barren subject for reflection when we hear the bells tolling for him who has bestowed them on the Church, and see his remains borne within the sacred edifice which he has endowed.

One morning in the early part of last July I was riding John Bunyan by Frenchay; the sun was up, the mowers were in the fields, and I was surrounded by the sounds and sights of hay-making and rural life, when suddenly the bells struck out, and added that peculiar and picturesque charm to the scene which they are so eminently calculated to do. It was not a marriage peal nor a funeral toll, but plainly rang for prayers; so I immediately had recourse to the Ecclesiastical Almanack, which I carry in my pocket, to see what "saint's day" it was; but no red letter marked the date, it commemorated no canonization. I accordingly rode John close to the hedge, and looking over called one of the hay-makers to me. A young girl who had a "pick" in her hand, and who remarked laughingly to her companions, she "wondered what the silly ould soul wanted," answered my call, and of her I inquired what the bells were ringing for.

"For church," said she.

"For church!—have they prayers every morning?"

"Yes, master. Wilt thee have a mouthful of cider?"

I thanked her for her civility and declined the cider, which was offered in far too equivocal a manner to induce me to accept it.

Not long since an application was made to me for information by some person who stated that he or she was

at Frenchay the previous Sunday, when the lessons were read by a layman, who left his pew and proceeded to the lectern for the purpose. Now this was not done on the occasion of my visit; the service and lessons being read by the Rector, the Rev. John Carter, B.D. The practice is, or was, I am aware, usual in the College Chapels at Oxford, but I have never known it adopted in a parish Church; nor, I confess, am I favourable to it: there is a danger of people not discriminating between the lessons and the liturgy, and the laity are already too prone to trench on the province of the clergy to render any (even legitimate) license of this kind (in my opinion) advisable.

Indeed, the utmost solemnity seemed to me to mark the celebration of the entire service; and I never witnessed a congregation unite more reverentially in the prayers and petitions of the Church. The sermon, which was preached by the Curate, was a close, logical, and sententious discourse. It was plain and compressed, and canvassed with a probing and searching truth and terseness the excuses, motives, and mental reservations of those who, affecting to deplore their weakness, and expressing a wish to live godly lives, have at the moment of such professions no disposition or sincere intention of trying to do so, being, as they are, secretly resolved not to make that sacrifice of pleasure which sincerity requires.

The daily morning service, which still continues, was commenced on the 1st January, 1843; and this alone would be ample proof of the earnest and active interest which the Rector takes in the pure worship of the Church, and well-being of those committed to his charge. Beautiful and a blessing at all times, I think the celebration of daily service in the country is, surrounded with still more pious and peaceful associations than elsewhere.

Every thing in and about Frenchay shows the utmost attention to cleanliness and propriety; and if I be disposed to find fault at all, it is with the position of the pulpit and reading desk, for which even the spread eagle, with cruel eye and curved beak, does not make amends.

Almondsbury.

I HAVE for many years, upon a certain morning in the week, been accustomed to visit the Bristol Library, for a share in which, with a few other minutiæ in the shape of chattels, I fell in at my father's demise. I do it for many reasons: I like to see the new books that come down—it is a habit I have, and I wish to enquire after the health of my excellent friend and old school-fellow, John Peace, and to tell him the news; for he is one of those men who believe time thrown away in perusing the paragraphs of a newsprint, while a single old book remains unread on the shelves round about him; and I think he has told me, he has not looked into a newspaper for twenty years—a source of some mortification to me, as I am too modest to call his attention to my lucubrations, and I think he knows no more at this moment of the Church Goer, than if he were one of the Brahmins of India, or the bonzes of Japan. And, perhaps, it is as well for my own comfort that he does not; for I am afraid my peripatetic impertinences would not meet with much favour in the eyes of such critical taste and hypercritical correctness; and I'd sooner have a bull fired at me from the Vatican, or a bill from Chancery, than the bad opinion of the elegant and orthodox defender of cathedral service.

But let it not be supposed that my esteemed school-fellow, as he sits the *beau ideal* of a literary celibate, deep recessed in his beehive chair, with his old seal by his side, beneath the sculptured foliage of Gibbons, is either indifferent or insensible to public affairs: on the contrary, though no broadsheet finds its way into or profanes that bookish seclusion, and his old loves, the folios, would fall off their shelves in a fit of jealousy, if they saw any paper in their patron's hands more modern than the "*English Mercurie*," he is glad to hear *traditionally* how

things are going on outside in the world, to receive a synopsis of public intelligence, though it were only to deplore the decadence of those good old principles, which were in fashion when he and I were school-fellows, and "George the Third was King."

It may be weakness, but when I light on any of my old class-fellows, there are so few of us left in this transitory world—*rari nantes in gurgite vasto*—that it is quite a comfort to talk to, or about, them. One consolation there is, that as he does not read the newspapers, he is not likely to know of the impudent liberty I have taken, and I hope no one will tell him.

I have wandered so far that I forget what led me in the first instance to refer to the Bristol Library; and from the Bristol Library it was a very natural digression to my old friend, as I could not for the life of me pass his beehive chair without a word of gossip. But now I recollect. I should have said, that having on the morning of my stated visit, some few weeks since, taken down Dugdale's Monasticon, (for long experience has rendered me hardly inferior to the Librarian in ferretting out any old book I want,) I went into the inner room to make a reference. There were two gentlemen sitting by the fire, one had Bohn's Catalogue in his hand, and the other, who appeared a Clergyman, was contemplating a silver pencil-case, which he was twirling in his fingers. I had not turned over many pages when I thought I heard the word "Church-Goer." I cocked my ears, for vanity sharpens our senses amazingly. "I have no idea who it is," said the man with the pencil-case; "but as the number of Churches in the neighbourhood are limited, his impudence must soon exhaust itself." I had no ambition to hear more, so I shut Dugdale and walked off, solacing myself with the reflection that my censor was one upon whose corns I had inadvertently trodden. I am prepared, however, for these little rubs: I cannot ride round to old country Churches, and think "to brush a web or two from off their walls," without expecting to get a little dust in my throat: we cannot hope to sweep clean without raising a little cloud;

for, to use the words of the Antiquary, "the dust was very ancient, peaceful, quiet dust, and would have remained so a hundred years had it not been disturbed."

There was more, however, in my censor's remarks than at the time I saw; for on Sunday morning I heard John Bunyan's tramp, tramp, and sudden halt at the street door, before I had thought whither my matin pilgrimage should be made. I looked about me, and on my first glimpse I seemed to have exhausted nearly all the notable Churches in the neighbourhood. On the Ashton side, to use what I believe is a sporting phrase, "I had shot down all the manor:" Henbury and Westbury were already visited, and there was not an inn-stable in the direction of Stapleton, Stoke Gifford, and Winterbourne, in which John Bunyan had not eaten his peck of corn. At length, as I opened my mouth for the last bit of buttered toast, Filton came into my head, and in five minutes more I had turned John's in that direction.

The ancient Persians in their Mythology (Hyde tells us,) assigned to different angels different departments in the moral and physical world, and to one named Chûr was entrusted the care of the disk of the sun—a notion which, if it were not an anachronism to suppose so, I should have thought borrowed from the idea of a maid of all work burnishing up the brass knocker every morning. Be this, however, as it may, Mr. Chûr seems to have done his duty with more than ordinary pains on the present occasion, and to have put more than a common polish on Sol's face, for his rays came pouring down, as through a cullender, on my poor head and shoulders; so that before I reached Filton I had resolved to start a parasol preparatory to my summer campaign, if indeed some of my fair friends who send me slices of cake and embroidered cushions, did not anticipate the expense by presenting me with one, in which case I should suggest the sacred umbrella of the Emperor of Morocco as a suitable model.

Having started early, I thought, as I did not hear the bell on passing the Anchor, that I was too soon. However, as I approached the Church, I found the silence was

attributable to a far different cause. The little tower was standing, it is true, but then

"*It stood alone,*
Like Adam's recollection of his fall;"

for the nave had disappeared before the industry of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and all that remained, at a disconsolate distance, were two-thirds of the chancel and half of the Ten Commandments; rubbish and old rafters filled up the intervening space; the lion and the unicorn had gone to perpetuate the parish loyalty in a neighbouring barn, and not a vestige was left of my friend Poulden or his pulpit.

"John," said I, "they have pulled down the Church to spite us: I had no great respect for the old edifice, but its abolition at this particular time is a pointed thing: it has been standing two hundred years, and they never thought of touching it until we thought of paying them a visit."

There was nothing for it, however, but to push on; I must get prayers somewhere—if not at Dan, at Beersheba. We had still an hour, and I determined to continue my course to Almondsbury, and hear my old friend Bishop Gray's son preach one of his father's sermons.

I hope none will draw an inference unfavourable to my sobriety, from the fact of my having put up at the Punch Bowl; but as John was the only party regaled within its precincts, no imputation can apply.

Man and boy I have been a hundred times at Almondsbury, yet I never stood on that hill and, as Dr. Watts sings,

"View'd the landscape o'er,"

without feeling its influence in every sense—the broad Severn and the rich intervening tract of marsh and meadow, and the old Church, with its pointed gables and its picturesque lead covered spire, beneath. I never heard Church bells in any situation, I think, sound so well: there were joy and gladness in every tone, and the ringers passing in and out occasionally through the belfry door,

which opened on the roof, gave an additional feature of animation to the scene. Having admonished two lads who were occupying themselves in a game of marbles, I strolled leisurely down the hill, and took my seat on a table tomb in the little churchyard, listening to the peals, and looking at the people as they passed in. A pleasant thing is that to take a seat on some old tomb or head stone in a country churchyard, on a sunny Sabbath morning, and see the congregation arrive in all their Sunday finery; and Almondsbury, judging from what I saw, is not without its rural beaux or its village beauties. Some of them stared at the old fellow in the snuff brown coat, as he sat on a slab sacred to somebody's memory; and others giggled, and all wondered what brought me there, if it was not to look for testimony in the shape of an old tombstone, or on a pilgrimage to the grave of my great ancestor Prince Alcmond.

Almondsbury was attached to the bishopric of Bristol when the revenues of the see were thought, and properly thought, to be too small to enable any man to maintain the position and dignity of a prelate. Now, however, that a union with Gloucester has taken place, I cannot see what further necessity there can exist for the old arrangement; not that I by any means deem the income of that Very Rev. Father in God, James Henry, too much for one who makes so good use of it; but as it was originally held upon grounds which no longer exist, I should be glad to see it opened once more to meritorious clergymen.

Almondsbury Church takes the visitor, who expects to see a plain country structure, quite by surprise on entering. Its handsome roof—its three aisles, separated by lofty pillars and pointed arches—its beautiful chancel and painted windows, seen through the columns that support the tower at the intersection—all give to the interior quite a cathedral-like effect. I can recollect when the Church was for the most part Norman; the arches low and heavy, and the chancel disfigured by a Grecian screen, which blocked up the fine east window. Within the last few years, however, the whole Church and chancel have been

extensively repaired, and altered to Early English; the east window, which is of three lights, with deep recessed mouldings and disengaged columns, opened, and some good painted glass put in. The chancel, as seen from the nave, has a most pleasing effect: its seeming distance appeared to lend enchantment to the scene; and as the varied light poured in upon the snowy surplices of the officiating clergymen, the view was sufficiently solemn and picturesque to have frightened my poor aunt into the idea of Popery, especially as there is a picture of Christ blessing the bread—a copy from that celebrated one at Lord Methuen's. This last was *(mirabile dictu!)* the gift of a Mr. Hill, a *Dissenter*, and painted by himself. Who can despair of decorations when they have been known to come from such quarters? There is, near the altar, a very perfect piscina, lately discovered; also another smaller one in the south cross aisle. There are two fonts in the Church—a modern font, in the wrong place, the gift of the squire, which is used; and an old font somewhere else, which is *not* used.

There are several tombs and monuments; but the most singular in point of composition is one in the north aisle, which reads and runs as follows:—

"Of all the creatures which God made under the sun, there is none so miserable as man; for all dumb creatures have no misfortunes do befal them but what come by nature; but man, through his own folly and against his own knowledge, brings himself into a thousand griefs both of soul and body;

As for example:—

Our father had two children, and against his knowledge committed the sin of idolatry upon us; for had our father done his duty towards God but one part in a thousand as he did towards us, when he prayed to God to spare our lives, God might have heard his prayers; but God is a jealous God, and punisheth the faults of parents upon their children. Though the sins of our father have deprived us of the light of the sun, thanks be to God, we enjoy more great, more sweet, more blessed light, which is the presence of God, the Maker of all lights, to whom be all honour and glory.

"Beneath this place ly the bodies of John and Elizabeth Maronne, in the memory of whom their father caused this

monument to be put up. Elizabeth died in 1708, aged 6; John died in 1711, aged 5. Their father, a poore man, born in the province of Dophine, in the kingdom of France. He believes that his sins were the cause that God took the life of his children.

"Pechur n'avanse pa un pas sans panser a la mort."

It will be seen by the above, that Monsieur Maronne, the father, speaks through and for the two little Maronnes; and I think, for the "style memorial," it might be adopted as a model. Observe the didactic manner in which he advances a principle, and then the demonstrative mode in which he proceeds to prove it—"*as, for example;*" and in this example it will be seen that M. Maronne has taken a leaf from Cardinal Wolsey's book—"Had I served my God as I served my King," &c. My French is far from first-rate; but if I do not make a mistake, Monsieur's morality is better than his orthography, as set forth in that last line. My fair young boarding-school friends will tell me whether it ought not to be, "Pecheur n'avance pas un pas sans penser a la mort?" If I am wrong, I beg pardon of the conjoint memories of M. Maronne and the stone-cutter. There are several monuments to people who "ate and drank and dined," and died in Over Court; but did nothing else, that I ever heard of, worth noticing, or so large a mass of masonry: one in the south cross aisle is dedicated to the Veale family, and supported by eight Corinthian columns; it is surmounted by two figures in a recumbent posture, the date being 1577. In the north aisle is a monument to the Chester family. There is also a pyramidical monument in the south aisle, to the memory of John Baker Dowell, who, with the Veales, was formerly an intern of Over. Over the north porch still remains, in good preservation, one of those snug little apartments, (called a parvis,) to be found in some old Churches, and formerly occupied by chauntry priests. Independently of the external window to admit light, they always have a small one looking into the interior of the Church, and yet existing in Almondsbury. These little snuggeries, as I

have said, were the habitations of priests, who officiated at various hours of the day, and even of the night, in the chauntries or private Chapels, often attached to large Churches in more or less numbers, and endowed by rich or illustrious dead, for the celebration of masses for the repose of their souls. I have often thought what a singular and sombre life priests must have had in these solitary little rooms, sentinel-like, keeping their lone watch by the silent and solemn Church, and looking down through their tiny window during the long hours of the night, on the moon-beams sleeping on pillar and pavement within. But I warrant you there was a little corner cupboard, with a pasty and bottle of Rhenish to cheer their hearts and prayers, and charm off those sheeted apparitions which are thought to play bo-peep round the piers of old parish Churches, as soon after the clock in the old tower above has struck twelve as they can conveniently come out of their graves. I have often fancied, too, that one of those apartments would suit my taste and means; and if it were not sacrilege to seek to rent it, I should not object to become the successor of some old monkish solitair in such lodgings. The principal contents of the one at Almondsbury at present is, a curious old chest, the history of which (if, indeed, it be not the identical one wherein the young lady of the "mistletoe bough" was locked up,) is now unknown: it formerly enshrined some papers, supposed to refer to Church lands belonging to the parish.

Almondsbury Church was dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and consecrated by four Bishops, (what a muster of mitres!) in the year 1148. It is supposed to be the mother Church, having as Chapels of Ease those of Elberton and Filton. Somewhere about or inside this Church (if anybody could find them,) are the ashes of Alcmond, a Saxon Prince, father of King Egbert. And now the reader has got every bit and scrap of history or antiquarian information which I can either beg, borrow, or steal, about the parish or Church of Almondsbury.

It is a pleasant little village, free, I believe, from heresy and schism, and a populous neighbourhood, for the Church

is well filled. On entering, I helped myself to a pew as noiselessly as I could, not to awaken three sons of the sod, who, early as it was, were asleep in the next seat. There were two young women in about the third pew from me; they will, perhaps, recollect an old man in a brown coat, who entered soon after; that gentleman presents his compliments to them, and begs that the next time a stranger visits their Church they will not turn round and stare him out of countenance, as if there had been a robbery of prayer-books, and they were endeavouring to identify the depredator. Nothing, however, could be more becoming than the bearing of the congregation generally.

The prayers were read by the Perpetual Curate, the Rev. Henry Gray. I have a great respect for Mr. Gray, if it were only for his father's sake. I can recollect the old Bishop so well. I have him in my mind's eye at this moment, riding about in his wig and apron; and I can never forget his bearing on the Sunday morning of the Bristol Riots, when he steadily refused to omit through any fear of violence the service in the Cathedral. I was one of those who thought to dissuade him, owing to the critical state of things. "No," said his Lordship, and his answer was worthy of a Confessor, "though I can do nothing else in defence of the citizens, I will pray for them!" And pray he did, and preach too, though with partially closed doors, to a congregation that appeared anything but comfortable or at ease; and I think the sermon, though by a Bishop, was lost upon them; as, from the frequent nervous peeps which they took out at the Green, I should say the people were not collected enough to be critical. When the Earl of Kildare was asked by Henry the Eighth why he burned the Cathedral of Cashel, he said, "because he thought the Bishop was in it:" and some, I have little doubt, were of opinion that instead of the presence of his Lordship being a protection against the populace, the fact might have been a further inducement to fire the pile.

Mr. Gray is an excellent and impressive reader, and nothing could be more correct, more decent, and more

orderly, than the manner in which the service was gone through. The singing, too, was very fairly and respectably done by the children, and everything in and about the Church and parish evinced pains bestowed and interest taken by the resident clergyman.

By the way, we hear a good deal about Bishops providing for, and taking care of, their own families—a practice consonant enough with nature. But it augurs no great knowledge of number one, on Bishop Gray's part, to find his son simply a Perpetual Curate in the see over which his father presided.

The sermon was preached by, I suppose, the Curate's Curate, on the subject of the sin against the Holy Ghost. It was a good straightforward sermon, delivered with animation. He was not afraid of his subject; but I think the selection of so deep and perplexing an one for a country Church not the most judicious. The preacher's action was not the most graceful or correct; for during the greater part of his sermon he held a death grip of the candle-branches at either side of the pulpit, and I thought once or twice would hug or lug them out of their sockets.

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